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TEN TALLIES

III

HARRY LAUDER

The Famous Mystery Stories



TORONTO  
MILFORD & ALLEN  
PUBLISHERS

# TEN TALES

BY

## HARRY LAUDER

*The famous Scottish Comedian*



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## PREFACE

"TELLING the Truth" is a habit which has grown upon me since I first learned to talk. In fact, in my earliest days, this trait was a source of constant anxiety to my father and mother.

Nevertheless, I have found Truth a most profitable commodity, for in depicting characters on the stage my success has always been largely attributable to the fact of their all being true studies from life.

So, too, in this little volume of Scottish stories, which I humbly submit to my friends of all nationalities, I shall endeavor to show a few real characters, which are true to life. I hope, therefore, that I shall be forgiven for the lies I am about to tell.

HARRY LAUDER.

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## "A HAMLEY CRACK"

If you were asked where in all your experience of human nature, you had met the strongest feeling and heard the most amusing conversation, you would, I am sure, instantly reply—"The railway train." So far as I am concerned, all I have known has been in the railway carriage that I have come across more funny folk than ever I met at the stage, and from those I have known some of our best characteristics, both as regards appearance and mannerisms of gesture and speech.

Some years ago I was travelling from Glasgow to Hamilton. The only other occupant of the compartment on leaving Glasgow was a stout, middle-aged woman, evidently of the working class. She was dressed in a rather shabby dark gown, over which she wore a bodice that had likewise worn some years of service, while on her head was a bonnet trimmed with an old-fashioned feather. At New-ton Station another woman opened the carriage door. She was even stouter than the lady already



## **"A HAMELY CRACK"**

**If you were asked where, in all your experience of human nature, you had met the strangest people and heard the most amusing conversations, you would, I am sure, instantly reply—"The railway train." So far as I am concerned, at all events, it has been in the railway carriage that I have come across more funny folks than ever I met on the stage, and from these I have taken some of my best character-studies, both as regards appearance and mannerisms of gesture and speech.**

**Some years ago I was travelling from Glasgow to Hamilton. The only other occupant of the compartment on leaving Glasgow was a stout, middle-aged woman, evidently of the working class. She was dressed in a rather shabby black gown, over which she wore a dolman that had likewise seen some years of service, while on her head was a wee bonnet trimmed with imitation cherries. At Newton Station another woman opened the carriage door. She was even stouter than the lady already**

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seated, and she "peched" dreadfully until she managed to sink down on the cushions.

"Thae trains are awfu' things," she exclaimed, turning to me with a sideward shake of her head; "they fair excite me!"

"Ma goodness!" broke in the other female, who had been looking out of the far window, and had not seen the newcomer's face. "Is that you, Mrs. Tamson? I thocht I kent the vice!"

"Ay, it's me, Mrs. Lindsay. I'm rale gled tae see ye. An' ye're lookin' that weel, mind; I wad hardly a kent ye!" went on the new arrival, moving away from opposite me and seating herself near Mrs. Tamson. All the way to Hamilton the two kept up "a hamely crack" on something like the following lines:

"It's richt cauld the day, dae ye no think?" asked Mrs. Lindsay, drawing her cloak closer in to her ample figure. "Ma feet are like lumps o' lead!"

"Ay, it's gey snell," was the reply. Then, with no apparent connection between the subjects: "Is yer man workin'?"

"Ay, but he's no oot the day. Ye see, we were up gey late last night. 'Dumplings'—ye ken 'Dumplings'!—weel, 'Dumplings' an' his wife cam' roon' to see us last nicht, an' we had a bit o' a shindy, an'

Jamie's heid's feelin' a bit thick the day. That's the wey that he's no at his work."

"That's an awfu' queer name that auld MacWheepie's gotten—'Dumpling.' " mused Mrs. Tamson. "Hoo on earth did they come tae ca' him siccan a name?"

"Oh, did ye never hear? Weel, for years he went about tellin' a'boddy that his wife Mag could mak' better dumplin's than ony woman in Hamilton, so the name just stuck to him, an' he seldom gets onything else. As I was sayin', they cam' to oor place last night. Mag—Mrs. MacWheepie, that is—wana feelin' very weel; she was complainin' o' an awfu' cauld in the heid——"

"A nesty thing, ma dear, a rale nesty thing; I've jist got rid o' yin masel'."

"Weel, to let ye understand," continued Mrs. Lindsay, paying no attention to the interruption, "Mag's nose was runnin' like a burn, an' she was lookin' that peely-wally I was sorry for her. Rale sorry! So I asks her in a whisper if she thocht a drap o' the hard stuff would dae her ony hairm. 'No,' says she—gey quick-like I thocht, but it's no for me to say onything. So I sends Jamie oot for a half-mutchkin, an' gi'es him a ten-shillin' bit, tellin' him to come back as quick's he could. an' we would

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a' hae a wee taste thegither. But when dae ye think he cam' hame, the lad? Ye widna believe it! Hauf-past ten, an' as fu's a wulk!"

"Sic a disgrace!" exclaimed Mrs. Tamson. "Ye maun hae been black affronted—afore 'Dumplings' an' his wife, too!"

"Black affronted!—I was bilin', an' ca'ed him a' the frosty, frizzle-faced pee-weeps that ever lived. But he jist stood an' laughed i' ma face! An' yet it wasna the shame o' the thing that annoy't me! There was that poor woman Mag MacWheepie standin' wi' her hanky at her nose, the very pictur o' disappointment. Ye see, if she hadna been expectin' a drap the suspense wouldna hae been sae bad. At the same time, mind ye, Mrs. Tamson, at the same time," went on Mrs. Lindsay, gradually speaking louder and louder—"at the same time I div not think that Mag MacWheepie should have said what she did. You wadna believe what she said!"

"Ma goodness, lassie, what did the woman say? She didna daur——"

"Ay, that's jist what she did. Fancy her turnin' on ma yin an' ca'in him oot'n his name! It was mair than flesh an' blood could stand, so I lost ma rag, an' let her tak' what I gien her! I div not

often lift ma haun, ma dear, but when I div there's some wecht in it, I gie ye my word!"

"Whaur was her man?" asked Mrs. Tamson, intensely interested in her friend's recital of these stirring events.

"Oh, he went oot to look for ma yin, an' he never cam' back," explained Mrs. Lindsay, calmly licking the points of her fingers and "damping down" her front hair on either side. "I don't think Mag'll ever come back either," she added with an unctuous chuckle. "But I'm rale glad Tammy MacWheepie wasna there when I open't oot on Mag, or I wad hae been in the Police Coort this mornin'. I gien her her character, I'm tellin' ye, an' if it wasna for the wee man in the corner there [meaning me, I presume], I would jist tell ye exackly what I said."

"I wad like fine tae ken, Mrs. Lindsay," wheedled the other. "Could ye no' look roon' the morn's afternoon an' hae a cup o' tea an' a crack? Ye'll be richt welcome, mind!"

"Well, I will," responded Mrs. Lindsay. "I'm gaun west the morn onyway to see my guid-dochter Nance, an' I'll look in i' the by-gaun."

"Yer guid-dochtar! I didna ken ye had a son mairried! No' Peter, surely?"

"Ay, Peter, richt enough," dryly remarked Mrs.

Lindsay, "but the less said aboot that the better. Laddies will be daff, ye ken, Mrs. Tamson, but there's nae use o' sayin' ony mair. They're livin' in a single end—it'll be as muckle as Serab can keep clean, I'll warrant."

Then Mrs. Lindsay, feeling probably that she had had quite a fair share of the conversation up to that point, proceeded to ask Mrs. Tamson when she had last seen her friend Mrs. Fleming.

"Jean Fleemin's nae frien' o' mine, Mrs. Lindsay, an' I'll thank ye tae mind it!" tartly responded Mrs. Tamson, giving a very decided snort through her nose.

"Hoots, toots, lassie," soothingly interjected the other, "I didna ken there was onything wrang wi' you an' her. I certainly did her something aboot it, noo that I come to mind, but it clean slippit me for the meenit." Whether or not Mrs. Tamson saw through the little ruse, she readily accepted her friend's apology, and forthwith started a long and slanderous tirade against the whole Fleming family.

"As for Jean hersel'," she continued, "I wadna put the worst past her! They tell me—but ye ken yersel' what they say. Mind you, had onybody said wan word to me against Jean Fleemin' three

months ago I would not have believed it, but a wumman that can turn roon' an' misca' her best freen', Mrs. Tamson—an' that's what she did to me, as ye ken fine—weel, as I say, I wadna put the worst past her!" And Mrs. Lindsay subsided with another snor' which spoke volumes.

"I was speakin' to wee Mary Macintyre yesterday," quietly remarked Mrs. Tamson after a becoming pause. "A queer craitur yon, eh?"

"A sneevelin' body, if ever there was yin," promptly commented Mrs. Lindsay; "but her mith-er was the same afore her!"

"She was tellin' me," proceeded Mrs. Tamson, "that her man had been idle for six weeks. She was awfu' doon in the mooth. I was rale sorry for her. But they tell me that her man's in twa Societies—12s 6d in the week aff ane an' seeven bob aff the ither. She hasna muckle to complain aboot, I'm thinkin'."

"Deed no!" was Mrs. Lindsay's reply. "But some folk never ken when they're weel aff! I often wonder whaur she gets a' the braws. The last time I seen her she had on a new dolman, that wisna there for a penny less than twenty-five shillin's."

"Oh," quickly put in Mrs. Tamson, "a'body kens whaur t' dolman cal' frae. She deals wi' a wee

packman frae Larkha'—a shillin' in the week, an' sometimes no' that! We could a' get fine braws, my dear, if we dealt wi' packmen."

"That's so, Mrs. Tamson," agreed the other. "The only time I manage to get onything new is when the 'Cop.' dividend's due. I'm sure it's a rale help, the 'Cop.,' an' hoo I wad manage without it I div not know. Ye're in the 'Cop.' yoursel', are ye no'?"

"Ay, oh, ay," responded Mrs. Lindsay, an expression of pain crossing her face. "But unfortunately oor book's in Jamie's name, an' he aye lifts the 'divvy.' I canna say that I see muckle o't, for he gets drunk every time he draws't. I've asked them at the Store a dizzen times to change it to ma name, but they say they canna dae that without his written permission. An' Jamie never was guid at writin'! By the bye," continued Mrs. Lindsay, evidently anxious to turn the conversation from a painful topic, "hoo's yer ain man gettin' on? He wasna very weel the last time I saw ye."

"He's no much better, I'm sorry to say"—and Mrs. Tamson heaved a sigh—"it's thae terrible pains in his legs—skiatic, I think they ca' the trouble. He was aff for a full week a month ago, no' able to pit his left leg to the grun'. Somebody advised me to try roastit ingins for't, so I got a pun'



o' thae big Spanish anes, roasted them as weel as I could, an' pat them on his leg. I maun admit they did him some good, but at the end o' twa days the hoose was smellin' like a pigstye. In fact, some o' the neebours sent for the Sanitary Inspector, thinkin' that the drains had got choked. I'm no nice-nosed masel', but yon ingins kickit up the awflest stink ever ye seen! The smell's no awa' frae the hoose yet, an' Jamie's leg's as bad as ever."

By this time we had arrived at Hamilton West Station, and as Mrs. Lindsay laboriously stepped down from the compartment, leaving her friend to go on with me to the main station, she whispered in a stage aside to the latter: "If ye happen to meet Mag MacWheepie, never let dab!"

## THE OLD PHILOSOPHER

"AM I richt for the Brig o' Dun?"

"Aye, jump in," said the porter. But the old fellow wanted to make assurance doubly sure, and when the stationmaster came hurrying along the platform, he asked, "Are ye sure this train gangs to the Brig o' Dun?"

"Yes, quite sure," said the official. "If ye dinna get in it'll be a' without ye."

"Dod, man, you're in an awfu' hurry," exclaimed the would-be passenger for the Bridge of Dun, ponderously mounting the carriage steps, and as ponderously taking his seat. This latter operation was scarcely performed when the engine whistle screamed, and the train moved out of Forfar station.

Taking off his round, soft, felt hat, the old gentleman mopped his furrowed brow with a gigantic red handkerchief, and turned to me—I was the only other occupant of the compartment—with the ob-

servation, "Gey impudent billies them railroad men, dae ye no think?"

I smiled, and remarked that, after all, they had a lot to worry them.

"Fegs! ye're maybe no far wrang!" he admitted. Then he added, with a Solomon-like expression, "We've a' got oor bits o' troubles, I'm thinkin'. I'se warrant ye'll hae yer ain, eh?"

What could I say but that there was none of us without our trials, our disappointments, our sorrows?

"That's jist exactly what I'm thinkin' the day. Here's me, eichty-fower year auld, an' I'm gaun awa' to Montrose to clap ma youngest brither's auldest son below the sod. Fancy an auld carl like me to the fore an' a lauddie like him as deid's a mauch!"

Although greatly tempted to smile at my aged companion's expressive phraseology, I restrained the desire, and said something about human life being all vanity.

"Vanity, vanity!" he repeated with an unctuous shake of the head. "That's what the Psaulmist said—or was it the Preacher? Man, he was a gey deevil, auld Dauvit, to write sic a lot o' wholesome truths! Vanity! Aye, it's a' vanity thegither." Then, with

a sudden return from the realms of philosophy, he turned to me with the query, "Are ye sure I'm richt for the Brig o' Dun? I've to change there for Montrose, ye ken."

I satisfied him that he was "right," and he looked out of the window for a few seconds without speaking. A fine-looking old man he was—a typical Scottish patriarch. His hair and his short bristly beard were white as the driven snow, his cheeks were fresh coloured, and his blue eyes full and luminous as those of a man thirty years his junior. Save for a slight stoop, his figure in repose gave one the impression of strength and grandeur in his manhood's prime.

"The crops are lookin' weel," he latterly commented. "We should hae a guid hairst the year! There's a'e blessin' about the railroad, it lats a body see hoo the corn's thrivin' in the different places withoot movin' aff's seat! At the same time," he went on, "we've had mair than plenty o' rain this past week or twa. I never like ower muckle rain. The damp gets into ma banes an' gi'es me an awfu' wheezin' i' the hest. It started wi' me last Januar, an' it was a' thro' gaun to a waddin'. Man," he concluded, "did ye ever think hoo the customs in waddin's hae changed this wheen years back?"

This was a subject on which I could speak with some degree of authority, but, as I wanted to hear the old man's views on it, I simply remarked that the marriage customs nowa<sup>d</sup>ays were very much altered since the day I was married.

"Mairriages noo are a bit o'a farce," he proceeded. "They maun g'wa' somewey for a week's garavarie—a honeymoon, they ca't—as soon as the meenister's feenished them aff. When I got mairried I had to gang oot to ma work next mornin'. I was gey sweer to gang, I will admit, but what could I dae? I had only eichteenpence left. Of coorse, I could've had a honeymoon inasel' if I had dune what they a' dae nooadays—get their furniture on tick. But I never was a man for tick; I aye likit to deal wi' the ready bawbees in ma loof. Are we far, think ye, frae the Brig o' Dun? I maun change there for Montrose, ye ken!"

We were still some distance from the "Bridge," and I calmed the old man's fears on the point. Thinking he might have something interesting to say on modern railway trains, I hazarded the remark that the railway system of the country was a wonderful thing.

"Won'erfu'!" he exclaimed. "Man, it's amazin'! What a heid that chap Stephenson maun hae had!

An' Jeems Watt—him that fun' oot aboot steam efter he had burnt his hands at the spoot o' the kettle—was even smarter, for if it hadna been for him that Stephenson billie would hae been clean beat for something to mak' his engine run. But wasn't it an awfu' daft-like thing for Jeems Watt to scaud himsel' wi' the steam? He micht hae kent better than try to keep in steam—a'body kens that! Hoo-somever, his play wi' the kettle made him a famous man. Jeems Watt! I often wonder if he wis ony relation o' Weemie Watt, the pollisman in Forfar. But I hardly think they'll be the same Watts; at least I never heard Weemie say onything about it, altho', to be sure, he's a thick-heided coof, and maybe doesna ken o' his great relations."

The topic thus raised was evidently a favourite one of the old man, for he continued to give me the benefit of his views on all modern inventions from the X-rays to the motor car. Speaking of the former, he characterised it as "a fell dangerous sort o' a thing when onybody could come along an' shine a fottygraph business on ye an' see hoo muckle money ye had in yer trooser pooches. It's a blessin'," he added, "that thae X-rays capers hav'na got to Forfar, or there wad be some queer stuchies i' the toon."

His opinions of the motor car were equally quaint and original. "I'm dootin' it'll be a black lookoot for the horse breeders, for thae motor cars need nae corn or straw—only a drappie ile and a 'lectric wire or twa. Faith, but they can traivel, too! They fair whup by ve like a flash o' lichtnin'. Theither nicht Kirsty an' masel' got a gey flaig. We were no lang in oor bed—it would be aboot nine o'clock—an Kirsty was jist doverin' ower. I was beginnin' to get kin' o' dwammy masel', when there was a hoot! hoot! on the street below oor windy. Kirsty let oot a skirl an' gruppit me by the beard. 'John,' says she, a' in a tremble, 'that'll be the fire engine. The hoose is on fire; the hoose is on fire! We'll be burnt to cinders whaur we lie.'

"'G'wa, woman,' says I, tearing her haun's oot o' ma beard; 'it's only ane o' them plaguey motor cars.' But she got a terrible friecht, an' her nerves kept loupin' a' nicht. In fac', she's had the doctor twice at her for nervous debeelity. This train's gaun awfu' a'ow surely. I'll be richt for the Brig o' Dun, I hope?"

The Bridge was still two stations away, so I again calmed his anxiety. I happened to have the "Dundee Advertiser" in my hand, and, casually glancing at it, I saw a column of a political meet-

ing entitled "Mr. Chamberlain at Sheffield." Here was a chance for elucidating the old fellow's views on a question which was just then shaking the political foundations of the country. "What do you think of this fiscal policy business?" I asked him.

"'Deed," he replied, without a moment's hesitation, "I dinna ken muckle about it. But thae political billies are kickin' up a fell row ower't. At first I thoct it had something to dae wi' the Fiscal at Forfar, an' I speer't Weemie Watt—bein' a polis-man, ye ken, an' conneckit wi' the Fiscal—what he had been daein'. Weemie tell't me that it wassna the Forfar Fiscal at a', it was Joe Chamberlain that had been makin' a' the steer. So I put on ma specs that nicht an' lookit up the reports in the papers. Faith, Weemie was richt enough! There was little else in the paper than speeches about Free Tred an' Protection an' tariffs an' retaliation, an' I dinna ken what forbye. It tain't bamboozl't me, and Kirsty said I was an auld fule for botherin' ma heid about sic blethers. But Joe Chamberlain's a clever man, mind ye! We maun a' alloo that! It was him, wasn't it, that inventit screwnails or put the sharp nebs on them, or something like that? Fega! there's lots o' things easy when ye ken hoo to dae them, but it's billies like



Joe Chamberlain that strike on the idea. The idea's the thing! Ye get mair for a guid idea than the likes o' you an' me wad get for a week's work. Noo, I had an idea when I wis young for iron coffins instead o' widden anes. I never did anything wi' it, but I think there was a fortune intilt. Wha wad be buried in a widden coffin for the worms an' horny-goloche to eat thro' if they could hae a guid strong iron coffin that wad defy the teeth o' a' thae sorts o' beasts—if they have teeth? I tell ye I fair lost ma chance o' becomin' famous, an' here's Joe Chamberlain got his name in a' the papers wi' screwnails and fiscal policies!"

"Speakin' about politics," went on the old man, when he had laughed along with me at his own joke, "I'm just wonnerin' if my youngest brither's auldest son was insured. It'll be a rare help to his father gin he's left a pound or twa. I'm in the Prudential masel', an' Kirsty as weel; no muckle to come, ye ken, but ave a wheen bawbees for buir'l expenses and the like. Puir Tammas! (That's ma youngest brither's auldest son, ye ken, him that's deid.) He was a nice lauddie, an' a decent, but he got a doon-sittin' could twa months ago, an' it made short work o' him at the feenish. I say, ma man," exclaimed the old fellow, jumping up suddenly,

"did we no stop for a meenit back there a bit? I'm thinkin' I'm wrang for the Brig o' Dun!"

To my inexpressible regret I recollected that the train had actually stopped for a brief space while my companion was dilating on the fiscal policy and I was listening, all intently, to his quaint observations thereon. There was nothing for it but to go to Laurencekirk, a few miles north, and there, fortunately, my old friend succeeded in catching a train back to the Bridge of Dun. He would still be in time to catch the Montrose connection. The stationmaster was good enough to keep the north-going train waiting while I went across to the other platform with the aged philosopher. He was terribly excited, and kept muttering something to the effect that he was "a bletherin' auld fule."

As he took his seat in the south train he again drew forth the ample red handkerchief, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and bade me good-bye, remarking, "It'll be a bonnie thing if I'm late for the buir'l o' my youngest brither's auldest son."

## THE MINER'S BAIRN

For nine weeks the miners at the Straight Colliery had been on strike—nine weeks of careless idleness to the boys; of dour, uncomplaining hardship to the majority of the men; and of real, genuine misery and hunger to hundreds of their dependents. I forget now exactly what it was about, but I have no doubt it was over some trifling question of wages which the coalmasters could have settled to the satisfaction of the miners without losing a quarter per cent. of their swollen dividends.

I was one of the strikers, and swore, along with my companions, rather to starve than give in. At the same time there was no real prospect of my being so far reduced in a physical sense. I was unmarried, I had a good few pounds in the Savings Bank at Hamilton, and all my brothers were in full employment at other pits. So it cost me very little to cheer the Miners' District Agents when they counselled us to "stand firm" and resist to the last the oppression of the heartless capitalists who

worked "the Straight" at such enormous profits! (What these profits were, of course, I had no idea, but I was certain they ran into millions of money, and that I assisted very materially to earn them.)

Yet some of the men, with wives and families dependent upon them, did not in their hearts echo the defiant "We'll never give in!" They knew too well that strikes meant gaunt, unhappy homes, haggard wives, hungry bairns. Albeit, they said nothing, and, tacitly at least, gave their loyal support to the strikers.

Jamie Forsyth was one of the silent men. He "came out" as a matter of course with the other miners, and attended all the meetings, though he took no active part in the proceedings. Latterly his face, never very mobile, became drawn and more serious-looking than ever, and his eyes had a strange, wild gleam in them which we could not fail to notice.

One afternoon Forsyth and I met on our way home from a mass-meeting of the men, and I jokingly chaffed him about taking the strike so much to heart. We had right on our side, I added, and were sure to win in the long run!

"Harry," he quietly remarked, stopping on the roadside and looking me full in the face with his

keen blue eyes, "strikes are for them that can afford them—no' for a workingman wi' an unwell wife and a wean that's dyin' for want o' nourishment. Strikes! How will we ever make up for the money we've lost this past six weeks? An' what benefit is a strike, even if we win, if it costs us the lives o' those that are near an' dear to us?"

I could not answer Jamie's passionate outburst, and we parted at the corner of the street in which he lived. It was many months afterwards that I came to learn the incidents which I now incorporate under the title of "The Miner's Bairn."

"Is there any settlement yet, Jamie?" asked a weak voice from the bed as Forsyth entered his little dwelling.

"No, Mary," bitterly replied her husband, throwing off his cap; "an' nae chance that I can see! The maisters are firm, an' the miners a' say that they're determined to sterve rather than cave in. It strikes me they'll jist hae to sterve. Hoo are ye noo, dearie—any better?" and Jamie leant over the bed and gazed down with tear-dimmed eyes on the wasted features of his wife.

"Oh, I'm no' that bad mazel, Jamie," replied the

young woman, making a brave effort to smile, "but the wean doesna seem to be thrivin' at a'. He's sleepin', for a wonder; but he's far frae richt, Jamie—he's far frae richt." Then, after a pause: "It'll break ma hert if onything comes ower him." And the tears rolled down the pinched, wan face of Mary Forsyth.

Jamie turned away with a tremble at his mouth, and sat down beside the spark of fire that burned feebly in the grate. Latterly he stirred the embers, and proceeded to boil the kettle, in order to make himself a cup of tea. His wife was quite unable to take anything in the way of food; all that she was allowed by the doctor being milk or beef-tea. The milk Jamie was still able to afford, but the beef-tea and other sick-bed delicacies were now quite out of the question.

The Forsyths had been married little over a year, and a week after the strike commenced at the Straight Colliery Mary had brought into the world a baby boy. Never strong herself, the ordeal proved almost too much for poor Mary, and her life was despaired of, Dr. M'Whirr telling Jamie plainly that even if she lived she would be an invalid for months to come, and adding that it was also a mere chance of the child pulling through.

Fortunately the doctor's worst fears were not realised, although his prediction about the young wife proving an invalid turned out to be too true. His doubts for the child also seemed to have been well grounded. For several weeks Mary's mother lived with her daughter and son-in-law, and did everything possible for their comfort and well-being. Jamie had, luckily, a few pounds in the bank, and was able for some time to meet all the many demands upon him, and to provide the necessary nourishing food for his wife and infant son. Meantime the strike continued with unabated rancour on both sides.

Jamie's kindly mother-in-law had ultimately to return to her own domestic duties, and he was thus left alone to attend to Mary and the baby. His savings were soon spent, and the few shillings that he received weekly from the Union were all required to keep a house above their heads and to purchase the bare necessities of existence. Poor fellow, he would gladly have laid down his life to see his wife well and strong, and to hear the merry "goo-goo" of his little son.

He was moodily seated at the fire, his heart a prey to all sorts of melancholy fears and doubts, when there was a sharp rap-a-tap-tap at the door.

He sprang up and opened it, and in strode the doctor.

"Well, Forsyth," was the medical man's greeting, "how's the wife and wean the day?"

M'Whirr was a kindly hearted but exceedingly brusque practitioner, who had once been in the army, but who had settled down in his native Lanarkshire, and had acquired a very large practice. It is a strange thing to say, but I always had the opinion that M'Whirr earned his popularity as much by fear as anything else, although there never was any question that the doctor's popularity was of the most extensive nature. The doctor had a habit, too, of speaking in the broadest of Scotch, and this habit he affected towards rich and poor alike. He was a bachelor, and reputed to be very wealthy.

Jamie shook his head mournfully. "There's nane o' them very braw, doctor," he quietly remarked. "But I suppose ye'll see that for yersel'," he added.

The doctor spoke a few words to Mrs. Forsyth, gave her one or two professional instructions, and refused to allow her—as she desired—to waken the sleeping child at her side. Then, turning to Jamie, he said in a half-whisper, "Come outside, Forsyth, I want to hae a word wi' ye."



Forsyth picked up his cap and passed outside with Dr. M'Whirr. The doctor led the way to the end of the "raws," then stopped and addressed Jamie in his usual direct fashion.

"Look here, James," he began, "I've a proposal to make to ye. Listen carefully and don't interrupt! Your wife's not at all well—in fact, she's worse than either you or I think. As things look at present she may, or she may not, get round the corner; the child will certainly not live unless it is taken away and properly cared for. Now, what I propose is this: I'll adopt the wean, save its little life—if at all possible—and make a man and a gentleman of it. I'm a bachelor, I've got more money than I can ever spend, and I want to have something to leave it to! If you agree I'll give you a hundred pounds, and you know what that sum will do in the way of saving your wife's life. I'll give you two days to think over the deal; my own opinion is that you're an ass if you don't accept it. Good-afternoon!"

Jamie's first inclination was to shout a malediction on the head of the departing figure for proposing what, at first blush, seemed so inhuman a scheme. But he refrained from the temptation, and as he walked slowly homewards he found himself,

almost against his will, weighing Dr. M'Whirr's proposal in the balance. And, curiously enough, love was the measure on both sides of the scale.

When he re-entered the house the child was wailing plaintively in his mother's arms, and the sounds of its little voice went to Jamie's heart like knife-thrusts.

"Oh, Jamie!" exclaimed Mary in that low, wearied tone which had been hers for weeks, "the poor wean! th . poor wee wean! What can we dae for him? Does the doctor no think he'll get better? Is that no' what he wantit to say to ye? Tell me, Jamie, tell me; I want to ken the worst." And Mary began to sob bitterly.

Jamie, who had his doubts about telling his wife the purport of the doctor's remarks, resolved there and then to make the confession. He did not put the matter so bluntly as the doctor had done, but merely hinted that Dr. M'Whirr had taken a fancy to the bairn; that he thought its life might be spared by careful treatment at that gentleman's own home, and that he had asked to be allowed to take it there.

"Tak' it awa' for good, Jamie—isn't that what he means?" meekly inquired Mary, who had followed her husband's recital with intense interest. "I

wouldna like to pairt wi' the ba. . . God kens that, Jamie—but if—if—oh, Jamie, I canna bear to see it pinin' awa' at me side an' no able to help it!" And the poor girl again began to cry, and she turned her face to the back of the bed.

Jamie had not told Mary anything about the doctor's financial proposal; he thought it better meantime to leave that part of the suggested arrangement alone, but when he saw how his wife was affected by his story of the doctor's scheme he much regretted that he had been led into speaking of it at all.

He hung over the bedside, clasped his weeping wife in his arms, and softly murmured in her ear that nobody should have their "wean" if she didn't want 'o part with it. The doctor doubtless meant it all through kindness of heart, he went on caressingly, but neither he nor any other person would dispossess them of their darling baby! Come weal, come woe, they would keep him at all costs! To such words as these, again warmly whispered, poor Mary fell asleep that night.

But next morning the child was worse, and Mary, of her own free will, once more broached the subject of the doctor's offer, pleading to Jamie that she herself would feel better if she knew that the bairn

was being well fed and well cared for. "It's hard to see him dee, Jamie," she wailed; "an' if he should slip awa' at ma side I'll no' be lang in followin' him! It's 'cause I love the bairn dearly, an' you tae, Jamie, that I think we should gie him to the doctor. He'll be guid to the wean, I'm sure."

It was with a heavy heart that Jamie Forsyth rang the bell of the doctor's house that afternoon. The thought of parting with his first-born was uppermost in his mind, but always came the vision of Mary's eyes looking wistfully in her suffering baby's face and the sound of her words, "If he dees at ma side I'll no' be lang in followin' him!"

Dr. M'Whirr was at home, and his usually hard visage brightened perceptibly when he saw Forsyth enter his surgery and heard his decision.

"Ah!" he explained, "that's good! We'll save the bairn yet, I think! And to-morrow you'll get your hundred pounds."

A swift look of pain crossed Jamie's face. "I wasna thinkin' about the money, doctor," he said in a low, agonised tone; "it's the bairn's life we're concerned for. Ye can keep your money."

"A bargain's a bargain, Forsyth, and you'll get the money to-morrow when you sign the adoption papers. I'll call with a nurse in the afternoon.

Now I must be going. Remember—to-morrow afternoon!"

Mary Forsyth shed many bitter tears that night, and it was as much as Jamie could do to prevent himself breaking down altogether. But for his wife's sake he assumed a cheerfulness which certainly wasn't in his heart. Again and again he whispered soothing words to Mary, assuring her that the doctor would be able to save the child's life, and that the mere knowledge of its recovery, in his skillful hands, would have a powerful effect in restoring health to herself. Jamie never said a word about the doctor's financial intentions. He was ill at ease on this phase of the matter, and felt a certain guiltiness whenever his thoughts reverted to it. And to his credit it must be said that the doctor's money was an outside consideration compared with the prospect of saving the life of the bairn.

At three o'clock next day there was a rumble of carriage wheels in the "raws," and a few moments later Dr. M'Whirr entered the Forsyths' little dwelling. He was accompanied by an immaculately attired nurse.

"Well, James," exclaimed the doctor, advancing to the bedside, "how are the patients to-day? No very braw, I'll warrant! But we'll soon hae 'em

both right—at least I hope so. And so,” turning to Mary, as she lay in bed with a wan smile on her face, “you’ve decided to let me have the bairn! Good! I’ll do everything for him that skill and money can do.”

While the doctor was speaking, Mary had clasped the little bundle of frail humanity close to her bosom, and was kissing it passionately, while the silent tears coursed down her cheeks. Jamie half-turned away his head.

Dr. M’Whirr realised the uncomfortable position of all present, and beckoned to the nurse to approach. Mary saw the signal, and thereupon tremblingly held out the child in Jamie’s direction.

“Kiss him, Jamie—for the last time,” she whispered. “Puir wean, puir wee wean; oor wean, Jamie!” Still holding out the child, Mary buried her face in the pillow and wept aloud.

With a great sob Forsyth tenderly caught the child in his strong arms, and pressed it to his breast. Then, turning with flashing eyes full on the doctor, he exclaimed: “We canna dae it, sir; we canna dae it! We’ll jist keep the bairn, an’ if it’s God’s will he’ll dee in his mither’s airms! I ken ye’ve meant it for the best, doctor,” he con-

tinued, "but we canna pairt wi' the wean. Live or dee, he remains wi' us."

On hearing her husband's ringing words, Mary looked swiftly up from her pillow, and there was in her eyes a gleam of intense joy. She said nothing, but simply held out her hands. Bending down over her, Jamie silently replaced the child in her bosom, to which the mother strained it with a glad, delicious moan.

Dr. M'Whirr pointed the nurse to the door, and followed her outside without another word being spoken.

. . . . .

From that hour mother and child began to mend, as we say in Scotland. The real improvement, however, set in next day when a large hamper of sick-bed delicacies was delivered at the Forsyths' house by an unknown messenger, who absolutely refused to divulge whence he came or by whom he had been sent. But Jamie and his wife had a shrewd suspicion that Dr. M'Whirr knew more about the hamper than anyone else, although he stoutly denied it when he called professionally later in the day. This time he came afoot, made no reference to the events of the preceding day, and ex-

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pressed great delight at the manifest betterment in the condition of both patients.

"I heard on my way down, James, that the strike's over," remarked the doctor on taking his departure. "Ye'll no' be sorry, I suppose?"

As the door closed behind the kindly hearted doctor Jamie Forsyth went over to the bed, impressed a glad, loving kiss on his wife's lips, and then gazed long and tenderly on the features of the sleeping bairn.



## MRS. M'MINN'S SECOND MAN

"It's an awfu' peety for ye, Mrs. M'Minn," said Jemima Jamieson, with an expression of supreme commiseration on her rather oily face, "for Tammy M'Minn wasna a bad man, mind."

"Ye're right there, Mrs. Jamieson; ye're right there," wailed Mrs. M'Minn, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron. "Tammy had his fauts, I aloo, but he was a rale decent man, an' it's only noo he's awa' that I miss him. What I'll dae withoot him I div not know. Yes, I div not know!" she repeated, again making gentle application of the apron to each eye in rhythmical succession.

The two ladies were seated in the kitchen of Mrs. Jamieson's house in one of the poorer streets not far from Gorbals Cross, Glasgow. It was the forenoon of the day following the funeral of the late lamented Tammas M'Minn, and Jemima Jamieson had deemed it but a neighbourly act to invite Betsy M'Minn into her domicile for a quiet, comforting "crack" and "a wee taste o' spirits" to add to the

effectiveness of the hospitality thus proffered. If the truth must be told, however, Jemima was influenced by other motives than the mere desire to show sympathy to the relict of the dead "Tammy." She had the reputation of being the greatest gossip-monger in the Gorbals, and would have walked ten miles any day to discuss a local scandal, get the first information of a forthcoming marriage, or glean a tit-bit of news concerning any individual blessed—or cursed—with her friendship. In the present case she was simply boiling over to know whether the deceased Tammy M'Minn had been insured or not, and whether her friend Betsy would have "anything coming" beyond her husband's Burial Society money. Could she but discover this, she would be the most important woman in the Gorbals for days to come. Being a lady of considerable wiliness, Mrs. Jamieson did not plunge at once into the topic nearest her heart, but approached it in a roundabout fashion. The other's last spoken words gave her the necessary cue.

"What'll ye dae, Mrs. M'Minn?" she went on, sadly, "ay, what'll ye dae? That's the pint! What can ony puir woman dae that's left withoot a man—an' nae money!"

"Oh, but I have money, Jemima!" replied Mrs.

M'Minn rather proudly, stiffening her head on her neck—"no much, ye ken, to mak' up for the loss o' a man," she continued, "but mair than lots o' women get in my poseshon!"

This one went home to Mrs. Jamieson rather severely, because it was common property in the street that when Peter Jamieson went aloft—or elsewhere—he left his spouse without two shillings to rub together. Jemima, however, swallowed the veiled remark without comment; she couldn't just then afford to quarrel with Mrs. M'Minn!

"I'm rale gled to hear it, Mrs. M'Minn," she replied. "A pound or twa in the Bank's no to be sneezed at, mind!" Then, in the most unconcerned manner imaginable, she inquired: "Tammy wouldna be heavy insured, was he, Betsy?" at the same time filling up her friend's almost empty glass.

Mrs. M'Minn watched the latter operation with a considerable degree of interest, but she was careful not to play into the other's hands so far as her answer to the insidious question was concerned.

"Well, no what you or me would ca' heavy," she admitted, "but still I've nothing to complain o'. Tammy's dune his duty to me better deid than ever he did livin'—nae disrespect to him noo that he's

awa'." And once more the apron went up to the eyes.

"I'm awfu' gled to hear it, Betsy," continued the other. "Ye'll no want for freen's in this world sae lang as ye can draw a pound or twa at the Bank. Ye should start a wee shop."

"A shop!" exclaimed Betsy. "O, I hivna the nerve to staun' ahint a coonter. I'm sure ye ken that fine!"

Mrs. Jamieson remembered the sly reference to the financial condition in which she had been left when Peter "hooked it," and was sorely tempted to make a stinging reply to this assertion on the part of her neighbour. But the moment was inopportune.

"Well, Betsy," she merely replied, "there's nothing I can see for ye but keepin' lodgers. There's lots o' trouble wi' them when they get drunk, but the money's a'richt, especially if ye're in the Co-Operative. I've never had less than twa lodgers masel', an' the woman's no up to much that canna mak' a rale guid livin' aff twa lodgers. Besides," she concluded, with just a shade of malice in her tones, "if ye're carefu' ye nicht get anither man!"

"I won'er to hear ye, Jemima Jamieson," exclaimed Betsy, bridling up, "speaking like that an'

Tammy M'Minn no cauld in the mools yet! It's a fair affront! Of course," she went on, rising from her chair and surveying her "friend" from head to heel with a withering stare, "a'body kens that ye're no' very particular in them things yersel'. What about the milkman ye frichten'd aff the road a month efter yer ain man dee't? It was the scandal o' the toon!"

This was too much for Jemima, who cast discretion to the winds, and would there and then, in the fulness of her rage, have done some physical injury to her guest had not the latter "joked" round the table and made a hurried exit from the house.

To cut uninteresting details, it may merely be said that Mrs. M'Minn, either acting on her own ideas of the situation or accepting the recommendation of friends and relations, duly blossomed forth as a Glasgow landlady.

Her first lodger was a big elderly Irishman, and he had only been in residence in the "land" for two days when Jemima Jamieson discovered that his name was Barney Lacey, that he was a "gaffer" at the Tradeston Gas Works, that his wages were twenty-eight shillings a week, that he was a widower with no family, and that he was being "swindled by that woman M'Minn to the tune of at least

ten bob a week." To this information she hastened to add—for she did not by any means keep it to herself—that he was a "saft-hertit lump, an' would be run in by that schemin' lim'ner, Betsy M'Minn, afore three months were ower." The phrase "run in," it need hardly be explained, had reference to another probable matrimonial venture on the part of his landlady.

Big Barney found himself exceedingly comfortable with Widow M'Minn. He was a quiet, well-conducted man throughout the week, but on Saturday evening he rolled into the street "full up," and just managed to stagger upstairs to his landlady's door before collapsing in a heap. Mrs. M'Minn, assisted by a grocer's message boy, pulled him into the house and slammed the door.

"She maun be as bold as brass," remarked Jemima Jamieson to a neighbour in the washing-house on Monday morning, surveying the events of Saturday night. "Think on her bein' left in the hoose wi' only that drucken beast beside her! I do believe she took aff his claes an' put him to bed—the woman that hadna the nerve to staun' ahint a coonter!"

"I never thocht muckle o' Betsy M'Minn," was all the comment that Jean M'Tavish allowed her-

self, but she did not furnish the information that her dislike 'or Betsy dated from the day that the latter refused to lend her half a crown to make up the children's insurance money, which she had spent on drink.

"Muckle o' her!" snorted Mrs. Jamieson as she shouldered her clean clothes and left the washing-house, "a shameless randy—that's what I ca' her!"

As the days went on, Mrs. M'Minn provided subject matter for further discussion amongst the neighbours. Her Irish lodger seemed to be thoroughly content with his new home, and he went out less and less in the evenings. The next Saturday night he came home in quite a respectable condition—not more than half-drunk—a return to Saturday righteousness which he had not known for years. The improvement thereafter was so pronounced that on the sixth Saturday of his residence with Mrs. M'Minn he came straight home from the Celtic-Rangers football match, and later in the evening was seen to saunter forth with his landlady, presumably to do the week-end shopping together.

On the stair they met Jemima Jamieson, who was so "flabbergasted," to use her own picturesque expression, that she had to run into Mrs. M'Tavish's house and beg for "a drap o' something." Mrs.

M'Tavish happened to have the needful, and, not being averse to joining in the little ceremony, the two ladies discussed the disgraceful and unparalleled conduct of Mrs. M'Minn in no measured terms. Subsequently they adjourned to get the views of the neighbours on the ground floor, but as both of these were out they returned to Mrs. M'Tavish's domicile, and duly punished the remainder of the half-mutchkin which that lady had, with creditable foresight, laid in for Sunday consumption.

But if the events of Saturday night gave rise to such indignation in the breasts of these virtuous females, what can be said of their horror on beholding, next afternoon, the joint departure from the tenement of Mrs. M'Minn and the stalwart gas-worker? To all appearances they were off for a walk or a run on the car, and Barney was happiness personified as he looked down on the trig and comely figure at his side.

"Oh, the brazen-faced bizzum, the shameless cat, the—the—witch!" exclaimed Jemima Jamieson, bursting into Mrs. M'Tavish's house, and breathlessly dragging her friend to the window. "Jist look at them! Can ye believe yer e'en? An' puir Tammy M'Minn no' twa month in the grave! She should get shoved in the Clyde!"



Jean M'Tavish eagerly "craned" her neck at the far side of the window and had no difficulty in viewing the scene which had so roused the wrath—or the jealousy—of her friend. But she was more matter-of-fact than Mrs. Jamieson, and her first comment showed her to be the possessor of a very observant eye and a capital memory.

"I see he's got on Tammy M'Minn's coat—the yin he bocht for Tibbie Simpson's mairriage! An' I'll bet the trousers are Tammy's forbye, though I couldna swear to them! I won'er the big Irish stirk doesna drap deid!"

"Did ye no see the tie he's wearin'?" excitedly put in Jemima. "No! ye'll no' see it wi' his back turn't, but I got a switch o't as they went oot, an' I could wager I seen Betsy buyin' the silk to mak' it at the Co-Op. on Tuesday efternune! I won'er't at the time what she was buyin' silk balls for! Oh! but she's a fly limmer; didn't I tell ye a' what would happen?"

Before Mrs. M'Minn and her lover had been ten minutes clear of the street, the news of their "on-goings" had been wafted like wildfire over the surrounding tenements—thanks to the diligent tongues of Mrs. Jamieson and Mrs. M'Tavish—and when they returned a couple of hours later every win-

dow held its quota of eager, gossiping women-folk who were all agreed that Mrs. Betsy M'Minn's heartless conduct warranted no less drastic punishment than "something with boiling oil in it." The pair most intimately concerned in these observations, however, serenely wended their way upstairs, Mrs. M'Minn well pleased to think of the jealous pangs in Jemima Jamieson's bosom—she caught the tail-end of Jemima's eye behind the dirty curtains on the second floor—and Big Barney equally delighted over the palpable progress he was making in the affections of the buxom widow.

Over their cup of tea half an hour later the amorous Irishman came suddenly to the point. A great wave of love seemed to sweep over him; Widow M'Minn looked so tempting in her crape dress with the little touch of white on her ample bosom!

"Shure, Mistress M'Minn, I can't kape the words back any longer—will ye change yer name to Mrs. Barney Lacey? It's as good a toitle as the one ye've got, an' it's a good man that offers it yez!" This was Barney's declaration of love.

Mrs. M'Minn blushed furiously and became so confused that she dropped her cup, smashing the saucer beneath it into a dozen pieces. The scalding tea splashed all over the table, and some of it fell

on Barney's knee. Up he jumped. So did the widow. Their eyes met and the accident was promptly forgotten, Barney slipping his arm round his landlady's by no means slender waist, and stealing a kiss there and then.

"When will we get married, me darlin'?" was Barney's first question after they had recovered their mutual equanimity.

"Well, Barney, dear," whispered the widow, again blushing coyly, "it can't be for a long time yet—three months anyway. It wouldna be dacent to Tammy, an' the neebours would mak' a perfect spec'lation o't if I taen anither man inside o' six months. So we'll jist hae to wait."

The Irishman used all his "Blarney" to make the widow relent and marry him straight off, but Mrs. M'Minn was determined, and even went the length of insisting on keeping their "engagement" private until the happy day should arrive. This meant that they must be seen abroad no more together; for, as Betsy said, "thae weemin aboot the doors had awfu' tongues, an' her character wad be fair torn to pieces if she an' Barney were kent to be coortin'." Besides, Mrs. M'Minn confided to her lover that she desired this arrangement, because it would enable

her to spring a complete surprise on the neighbours generally, and on Jemima Jamieson in particular.

So Barney, much against his will be it said, had perforce to fall in with the plan, but he swore again and again that he would never live through the three weary months which lay between him and the "colleen of his heart."

Gradually Jemima Jamieson and the other neighbours began to observe that Mrs. M'Minn and her lodger were never now seen outside together, and the story went around that they had quarrelled, and that Barney was simply "stayin' on" with Mrs. M'Minn because of his dislike to changing lodgings. Mrs. Jamieson was overjoyed to think that her enemy had had a "set back," and it occurred to her that there was no reason why she herself should not endeavour to get into the Irishman's good graces. He was "a fine strappin' man," she said to herself, "an' twenty-eight bob wasna a bad pey comin' in every week!" So she laid herself out to ingratiate herself with Mrs. M'Minn's lodger, and was usually hanging about her door or on the stairs at the hours when Barney came from or went to his work.

One evening when she knew Mrs. M'Minn was away visiting a friend in Springburn she actually

invited Barney into her house for "a cup o' tea"—an invitation which he refused on the plea that he was due at a meeting of the "Hibernians"—and in many other ways she gave him to understand her partiality for his company. As a matter of fact, Jemima was now head over ears in love with the gallant gasworker, and she resolved to make one bold effort to secure his affections. What more potent device to this end could be imagined than the sending to him of a pair of braces? Jemima "swithered" long and earnestly between braces and socks, but the braces carried the day. They were sent by post along with a brief and very illiterate note to the effect that the shamrock design had been sewn by her own hands, and that she, Jemima Jamieson, "hoped Mr. Lacey would be long spared to wear them."

Well knowing the nature of the sentiments harboured by his landlady for Jemima Jamieson, Barney had never said a word to the former about Jemima's palpable efforts to inveigle him. He was naturally a peace-loving man, and had no desire to form the subject of an open outbreak between two jealous women. The arrival of the braces, however, brought matters to a head, and Barney felt compelled to report the receipt of Jemima's gift to his

sweetheart, adding many protestations—for Mrs. M'Minn was inclined to be suspicious—of his innocence in the whole affair.

At first Betsy was struck dumb with astonishment, but rage succeeded her surprise, and she quickly found her tongue.

"Oh, the impidence o' that woman! Oh, the twa-faced, sleekit slut! to send my lodger a pair o' gallases, an' to ma ain hoose forbye! It's past thinkin'! Oh, the double dealin', shameless bizzum! For less than tu'pence I wad draw the buckles o' the gallases across the left side o' her jaw!" And poor Mrs. M'Minn, quite overcome, sank back into her chair and moaned aloud.

Barney did his best to console her by repeated assurances that he loved her and her alone, and that he had never in the slightest degree encouraged the attentions of Jemima Jamieson. After a time Mrs. M'Minn became more collected, and expressed the resolve to take Jemima's present down to the lady's house and return it along with "a bit o' her mind."

Barney, however, was averse to any such course, arguing that no good would come of it, that there would be certain to be "a divil of a Kilkenny row" when the two women met, and that the neighbours

would all be "turned out to a choild." So he prevailed upon the widow, to sit down on her chair, and proceeded to unfold a plan which he had evolved for the return of the braces and the discomfiture of Jemima Jamieson.

"The chance is sure to come, alannah," he concluded, "an' she'll be struck stone dumb afore her gossipin' neighbours. Then ye'll be revenged for everything she's done to ye, me darlin'."

So Barney put the braces in his pocket and carried them with him for a couple of days. He did not want to meet Jemima alone, because that would have spoiled his scheme, but, as great good luck had it, the first time he met her she was standing at the "close mooth" with Jean M'Tavish, Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. Macdonald, and several other kindred spirits, all eagerly discussing the latest marriage in the district.

Jemima smiled affably as Barney approached, and drew slightly aside from her companions to receive the look and words of thanks which she was certain Barney was dying to convey to her. But her surprise and horror were beyond expression when the big Irishman stopped right in the midst of the crowd of women and addressed her pointedly, and in the hearing of all present.

"It's very koind and neighbourly of yez, Mrs. Jamieson, to send me them braces"—drawing the parcel out of his pocket—"but the Widow M'Minn says that I've got to hand them back to yez! Perhaps they'll do for some other man that's not going to get married."

Jemima gasped. "Mrs. M'Minn!" she half-shrieked. "Married! Who's goin' to get married? I thocht you an' her had fa'en oot?"

"Oh," said Barney, with a quiet smile, pushing the parcel into Mrs. Jamieson's arms, "that's only the gossip o' this gossipin' tiniment! Mrs. M'Minn's goin' to change her name to Mrs. Barney Lacey, an' I want to mate the man as says it ain't a better!" Then Barney passed upstairs.

Poor Jemima stole shamefacedly to her own house, the scornful laughter of her friends ringing in her ears. She was made the butt of every female in the street, and even her friend, Jean M'Tavish, said it "served her richt for tryin' to steal anither woman's man."

A week before Mrs. M'Minn's wedding Jemima Jamieson flitted from the Gorbala.



## ANDY BROON'S LOVE AFFAIR

"ANDY BROON," as he was generally called, could hardly be described as a typical Lanarkshire miner. He was too dull, too heavy, to represent the ordinary collier of the Black Country, who, whatever his deficiency of education and faults of upbringing, can generally be written down a shrewd, intelligent chap—rough-hewn, I grant you, as the coals he sends to the surface, but with a plentiful supply of natural intelligence and mother-wit.

Andy was a first-class man with the pick, and his "rake" could always be depended upon by the pony-driver almost to a minute. But whether "up" or "down," Andy was one of the quietest of mortals. His vocabulary was seldom known to extend beyond "Fine mornin'," "It's a braw nicht," or the monosyllables "Aye" or "No," when asked a question by any of his comrades.

Once upon a time this quaint characteristic of Andy's was made the subject of many an open jest among the colliers at No. 9 Pit, Hamilton. They

were wont, too, to play all manner of tricks on him. One day at "piece-time," however, Andy forcibly objected to having his mouth examined, "to see whether he had a tongue," as Bill Watson, the mine bully, phrased it.

"Aye, I've got a tongue," exclaimed Andy with quite unusual flow of speech, throwing himself clear of his tormentors, "an' a pair o' jukes forbye. Wad ye like to sample them?"

The very idea of Andy Broon thus showing fight was so rich that Bill Watson and the others shrieked with merriment. But it was an impertinence that could not be tolerated by Bill, who promptly advanced, and, coolly spreading one grimy hand over Andy's face, "pushed" it away from him with a contemptuous snort. The fight didn't last long. It was a hurricane engagement, from which Bill Watson emerged so tamely that he was off duty for a week. Andy went back to "the face" and to his customary silence as if nothing had happened; but ever afterwards he was left severely alone as a dangerous man with whom to take liberties.

Andy would be about twenty-seven years of age when I met him first at No. 9 Pit. We had absolutely nothing in common, but somehow I formed a

liking for him, and it is certain that he had a great admiration for me. When I gave the boys a song in the little cabin at the top of the "cowsey brae" none of the crowd applauded so heartily or so long as Andy Broon. When, as a pony-driver, I had any trouble either with my "sheltie" or my hitches, there was nobody more willing than he to lend a helping hand. When we parted at the pithead of an evening to go our several ways, there was many a louder, but no cheerier, "Guld-nicht, Harry," from among my black and weary comrades.

But our friendship, if such it could be called, knew no closer ties until one evening I met Andy by "special appointment." As we came up in the "cage" together an hour or two previously he had whispered to me in a very dramatic voice: "Can ye meet us the nicht roond by the auld quarry? I want to see you very partic'lar." I agreed to do so, wondering greatly what important business Andy Broon could have to transact with me at the old quarry in the dusk of an autumn evening. Andy had no companions, male or female; he was never known to give a confidence or to invite one. He was a puzzle to everybody; but I, for one, never felt inclined to subscribe to the general impression that Andy "wisna a' there."

He was waiting for me at the foot of "the lovers' lane" that runs between the two quarry holes, and his eyes gleamed with satisfaction as he came towards me. "Hullo, Harry!" was his simple greeting. Mine took an exactly similar form, with the substitution of the word "Andy" for my own.

Together we started on our stroll. Naturally, I was all anxiety to learn the nature of the important business to which Andy had so mysteriously referred in the "cage," and I was on the point of asking for enlightenment thereon when my companion slipped a wee paper parcel into my hand.

"Dae ye like thick black, Harry?" he simultaneously asked. "That's twa ounce o' the best," he continued, edging slightly away to see the effect upon me of his unexpected generosity.

I replied, with emphatic conviction, that "thick black," either for chewing or smoking, was the best tobacco in the world, but added a desire to know why he had singled me out for such an extraordinary expression of his good-will.

"It's a' richt, Harry!" he replied with a self-satisfied air. "It's a' richt! Say nothing!"

This was exactly what Andy did himself—said nothing—and we walked on for quite a distance in dead silence. Frankly, I was beginning to recast

my views on the question of Andy's being "a' there" or not, and was half regretting that I had agreed to meet him. Besides, it was beginning to get dark, and there were few people abroad. On the other hand, I argued to myself, not even a lunatic would begin any fell scheme of personal injury by presenting his prospective victim with two ounces of "thick black."

Suddenly Andy broke the silence, and did so with a query which, considering I was only sixteen years of age, completely took my breath away.

"What like is't to be mairried, Harry?" he asked in a low, anxious voice, at the same time looking eagerly into my face.

I laughed heartily—couldn't help it. The question, and the solemnity with which it was put, were too much for me, but as I saw that Andy was sorely disappointed I hastened to remark that, though I was not married myself I had an idea that "it must be awfu' nice."

"That's jist what I think!" gleefully exclaimed Andy, his spirits recovering instantly. "An' I'm gaun tae get mairried masel'!" he added triumphantly.

This was news indeed. Andy Broon to be married! The fact would set all Hamilton speaking.

So this was "the important business" Andy had to transact with me, though why he should make me his confidant was not exactly plain at the moment. I congratulated him, and, of course, followed with the customary question as to who the lucky girl was.

"Ah!" exclaimed Andy, his face becoming serious once more. "That's what I dinna ken mazel'—at least, Harry, I'm no very sure, an' I wantit tae hae a crack wi' ye about the maitter."

Andy went on then to explain that for some time he had secretly harboured "a richt notion o' Jess M'Gregor, the minister's slavey." He confessed that he had never spoken to her on the subject of his affections; as a matter of fact, he admitted that their acquaintance hitherto had only extended to sundry nods and smiles to each other as they met on the street. But he was anxious to bring affairs to a more satisfactory point. Could I tell him how to go about the business, and could I give him, as an extra special favour, the benefit of my mature ideas on the art of love-making?

Young though I was, I must admit that I had already had some slight experience "among the lassies O," but scarcely enough to set myself up as a mentor in affairs of the heart to a man fully ten

years older than myself. However, it was quite apparent that Andy regarded me as an authority on the subject, and, seeing that the poor chap was in such deadly earnest, I did my best to keep a sober face at his extraordinary story and proceeded to deal with the situation to the best of my ability.

"Well, Andy," I began, with as serious a "dial" as I could assume, "there's only one sure way that I ken o' for gettin' the saft side o' a lass."

"Aye," broke in Andy with great eagerness. "What is't, Harry?"

"Listen, an' I'll explain the whole affair," I returned with a knowing wink. "The first thing you've to do is to get speakin' to Jess—chummy wi' her. D'ye see? That should be easy! Jist gang up to her the first nicht ye meet her on the street, an' ask her if she would like a gless o' ice-cream. Ten to one she'll jump at it."

"Man, it's a grand idea," said Andy enthusiastically. "I never thocht o't, Harry! What a heid ye've got. But what'll I say to Jess efter she's shiftit the ice-cream?"

"Oh, ask her to hae anither! Then tell her that ye'll meet her on Setterday nicht. If she says yes ye can tak' her up to Glesca an' treat her to the

teetotallers' 'burst' in the Wellington Palace—sixpence a time, an' a rare good stuffin' it is."

"Good for you, Harry!" was Andy's response. "Will she like that, dae ye think?"

"Like it!" I repeated with fine sarcasm. "That shows a' you ken aboot women! She'll enjoy her-sel' first-rate, an' think the world o' ye for takin' her. Efter the feed," I continued, "there'll be a rare concert, an' if ye listen to the comics layin' aff aboot their love affairs ye'll maybe get a tip or twa, that'll come in handy for tryin' on wi' Jess. Then——"

"Aye!" feverishly chimed in Andy, "what then?"

"Weel, ye jist come hame to Hamilton, but if ye're fly ye'll stand her anither glass o' ice-cream on the road to the station, an' buy a couple o' fruit-cakes to eat in the train. See?"

"Richt!" said Andy, slapping his leg and laughing cheerfully. "Dae ye think she'll love me after a' that, Harry?"

"If she doesna she's no worth botherin' aboot, Andy," was my emphatic reply. "But there's one thing you simply mustna forget—it sort o' puts a finish on the whole affair."

"Yes," said Andy, stopping suddenly and again



looking anxiously in my face, "that's wha' I want—a good finish-up to the job."

"Well," I continued, "when ye come back to Hamilton, an' the twa o' ye arrive at the minister's gate, grip Jess quick, gie her a kiss, an' then run awa' as hard as ever ye can."

"What guid'll that do, Harry?" inquired Andy in a puzzled tone of voice. "Maybe she'll be gry, and no' speak to me again. It's a bit risky is't no'?"

"Never mind," I lightly replied. "You're right, Andy. It's the only sure way, mind I ken—  
—an' I ken a' about it."

By this time we had wandered back to the town, and soon afterwards I walked in good-night, telling him that I would see him early in the week and learn the result of his initial attacks on the heart of Jess M'Gregor.

The next day was Friday and Andy announced his determination of seeing Jess that night on her way to the minister's Bible class, and carrying out my suggestion and instructions to the letter. "I'll be awfu' excited, Harry," were his last words to me "but I'll do as ye've tel't me, because—well, because I'm richt fond o' Jess."

On Saturday morning, Andy came along to the

"level" at which I was working as a pony-driver and gleefully related to me the results of his encounter with Jess on her way to the Bible class.

"It's as richt as rain, Harry!" he exclaimed, giving me a slap on the back which sent me reeling to the other side of the level. "I'm to see her the nicht, and we're gaun up to Glesca to the teetotallers' 'Burst.'"

"Good," I replied, with a smile at Andy's enthusiasm. "But mind what I tell't ye—especially aboot the kissin'. Man," I added, as we separated, "a kiss is a rare thing."

"Maybe frae Jess M'Gregor—naebody else!" replied Andy with all a lover's prejudice. Then we parted.

On the Sunday forenoon Andy turned up at our house in a melancholy state of mental worry, and begged me to see him privately for a few minutes. He had carried out my instructions to the letter, he afterwards explained in nervous tones, down to the ice-cream, the fruit-cakes, and the farewell episode at the minister's gate. "I think the kissin' caper has clean cooper'd me, Harry," he concluded with almost a wail, "for she slapp'd ma face an' jump't into the hoose afore I kent whaur I wis or what I had dune."

I told him that he had performed his part splendidly, and that there was nothing to be afraid of. "But, of course," I added, "ye'll need to send her a love-letter."

Andy's eyes almost started out of their sockets at this. A love-letter! He had never written an ordinary letter in his life, let alone a love-letter. I was no great adept at letter-writing myself, but between us we drafted the following epistle, which Andy carefully carried away with him to the Post Office:

"Dear Jess:—I'm very sorry that I kissed you last night. I'll never do it again. But I couldna help myself, you looked that tricky in your blue frock. If you're no' angry, I'll see you again on Wednesday night out the quarry road. I remain,  
"Andrew Broon."

This masterpiece of a "love-letter" completely softened the wrath of Jess—if, indeed, she had ever harboured any—for on the Wednesday evening Andy and I saw her coming along the road. She was wearing her blue frock! I discreetly slipped away, and from a safe distance watched the meeting of the lovers.

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Three months later they were married. Andy Broon's waddin' was a great affair. I was best man, the best maid was Nance; but now I'm wandering from "Andy Broon's Love Affair" to my OWL.

## TWO "DESERTERS"

MIDNIGHT at Euston on a bitterly cold Saturday evening in December! There were fewer travellers than usual, and the Scotch express was nothing like "full up." For this circumstance I was devoutly thankful, as it gave me a "side" all to myself. Indeed, up till the stroke of the hour it looked as though I were to be alone in the compartment, but just as the guard's whistle blew a young man came running along the platform and jumped in beside me. In a few seconds the train was rushing through the northern suburbs of London.

My companion was a tall, handsome young fellow, with a face deep-tanned by the sun or exposure to all kinds of weather. A traveller of some kind, I was certain, probably a sailor! He wore a plain suit of tweed, a cap of the same material, and in place of collar and tie a soft black silk muffler was carelessly tied round his neck. He had no luggage, not even a handbag.

I was in no mood for conversation myself, having

just driven to Euston after a hard night's work at three of the leading London halls, but had I been so inclined my travelling companion's demeanour would have effectively prevented me. His face was solemn and drawn, and he kept staring out the window into the blackness of the night, a strange lacklustre gleam in his grey eyes. I tried to close mine and go to sleep, but found myself continually opening them and having another peep at my companion. For a full hour he remained motionless in his corner, and I might as well have been non-existent for all the notice he took of me. I began to feel distinctly uncomfortable; it was positively eery to look at the immobile figure in the corner, with the stern features and the keen eyes ever "glowering" into nothingness.

"Look here, young man!" I latterly blurted out in good plain Scotch, "I dinna ken wha ye are or whaur ye're gaun, but I maun speak to ye—or burst!"

He turned round swiftly, and a brighter expression robbed his face of its previous set melancholy. "Ah, you're Scotch, anyhow!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps I have been lacking in politeness. If so, I am sorry, but—I am troubled, and have much to think of. You will excuse me, I am sure."

He spoke like a gentleman, belying the muffler and the coarse tweed suit, and I at once felt curiously interested in him.

"Well," I kindly continued, "I have no desire to pry into your affairs, but you know the old saying about trouble shared losing half its weight. Maybe I could advise you; I'm much older than you are."

He shook his head, at the same time eyeing me up and down. "You don't look like a policeman or an army officer," he said as he finished his scrutiny.

"I'm neither," I replied, with a laugh, "although I've played both parts in my time."

"What do you mean?" he sharply asked, starting up in his corner. Then, with a smile, "Ah, I see," he added, "you're an actor. I would never have taken you for that, either! But you seem a decent sort of chap, and I don't mind telling you my story. I'm a deserter!"

It was now my turn to start. "A deserter!" I repeated. "Then you're a soldier, and have done something wrong. Why have you deserted?"

"To look into my mother's face before she dies!" he bitterly exclaimed, the tears welling in his eyes and his whole body quivering with sudden emotion.

"But surely that is not deserting?" I remarked.

"You could have got leave for such a journey and such a sad mission!"

"Yea," he responded quietly, "had I been on a home station, but I have come from India."

Gradually he told me his story as the express tore its way through the English Midlands. He was the son of well-to-do parents, who lived in a manufacturing town in the south of Scotland, but bad company had brought its customary reward in his case, and he ran away from home in disgrace, joining the army under an assumed name, and soon thereafter being drafted to India.

"My intention was to work hard and get my commission, if at all possible. That secured, I felt that I could then go back to D—— and let my father and mother see how I had expiated my youthful follies. Promotion came fairly rapidly, and I was soon colour-sergeant of my company, with every prospect of getting my commission on account of some rather hot work I happened to take part in during a hill tribe dispute. How I longed for the day to come when I could go proudly up to the old home in Scotland, kiss my darling mother, and show my officer's commission to my honest but stern-hearted father.

"My mind was just in such a groove as this one



afternoon at Rawal Pindi, when I came face to face with a young lady whom I had known from childhood in our native town. She recognised me at once. She had come out to India a few weeks previously to be married to a civilian, she told me, and was living with her husband at Rawal. Of course, my first inquiries were of my mother, father, brothers, and sisters. How were they all, and had my disappearance six years before affected any of them very greatly? The girl's replies sent the blood from my heart in great heavy beats. My youngest brother Frank was dead—killed in a railway accident—my father was still hale and hearty, but my mother had been an invalid for several years, and was not expected to recover. 'Jack, Jack,' entreated the girl, 'go home at any cost and any sacrifice, and let your poor mother know that you are at least alive. She is breaking her heart with grief and worry, and I think, yes, I am sure, it is because of your mysterious absence and silence.'

"I hurried away to the barracks, scarce knowing what I was doing, and went straight to the Commanding Officer with a request for three months' leave of absence. He was very sorry for me. I told him the whole story, but such a furlough was impossible in the existing state of unrest up-country.

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We might be called north any day and any hour. There was no more to be said. That night I slunk like a thief out of the barracks, went to a native shop in the bazaar and bought an old suit of civilian clothes. An hour later I was in the train for Calcutta—a deserter from the colours! From there I worked my passage home in a tramp steamer, and I arrived in London this morning. That is my story. Every day, every hour, aye, every minute since I left the regimental quarters in India my mind has been torn between two emotions—a passionate desire to again behold my mother's face and a sense of burning shame for my unsoldierly action in taking French leave. Add to that the uncertainty of my reception at home—what will I find there?—and you can form some idea of the present state of my heart and my brain. If God is only good enough to let me see my mother alive, to clasp her in my arms once more, I think I can face anything that may afterwards happen."

For some little time I said nothing to the youth opposite; his extraordinary story, told with the utmost candour, had powerfully affected me, and I felt a lump in my throat as I looked into his honest face and sorrowful grey eyes. When I did speak what could I say but that I sympathised with him

deeply in his terrible position, and I hoped he would bring gladness and health to his drooping mother, and that the military authorities would be willing to make allowances for his hasty action, impelled as it was by remorse and love?

I did my best to cheer him during the remainder of our journey together. He left the train at Carlisle, where he would get a slow connection for D—, but before we parted he promised to write me at Glasgow and let me know how he fared on arriving home. Two days later I received the following note from him:

"My mother died two days before I reached home. Thank God! I was able to be present at her funeral—that, at least, was a negative comfort. My father never spoke to me. To-night I go back to London to surrender myself to the military authorities as a deserter. What they will do with me I neither know nor care. For your kindly companionship in the train the other evening I thank you.

"John C—."

. I never heard of him again.

The other "deserter" of whom I wish to write was of quite a different stamp. For his crime,

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alas! too common, there is no punishment save that of the conscience, and, after all, this is generally far greater than the punishment meted out by human laws.

I was performing in one of the Manchester halls some years ago when an attendant handed me a note which had been sent up from a young woman waiting at the stage door. The note was an urgent request that I should see the writer on important private business. Having a few minutes to spare, I asked that the visitor should be sent to my dressing-room.

Soon afterwards a girl of about eighteen timidly entered in response to my "Come in!" She was as pretty as a picture, with rosy cheeks, large blue eyes, and a mass of curly brown hair. But that there was something wrong I quickly discerned. She was flushed and nervous, and a closer look at her features revealed the fact that she had been weeping bitterly.

"Well, my lassie," I said in a kindly tone, "what can I do for you? I hope you're not in any trouble," I added, seeing that the tears were not far distant from her lovely eyes.

"Oh, yes, I am," she exclaimed feverishly. "Very great trouble. I cannot tell you what it is, but you

can assist me if you like. It is your—your cousin—will you please tell me where he has gone to—where I can find him? I must find him!" And she burst into a fit of sobbing.

I did my best to calm the poor child, and told her I had no cousin in England; all my relatives were far beyond the banks o' Tweed. She jumped wildly from the chair into which she had fallen, and in her eyes there was a fearful light—the light of disillusionment and unspeakable dread.

"Then he must have told me lies, lies, lies!" she cried in agonised tones, when she had recovered from the shock of my statement. "My God! how could he do it? How could he do it? And I trusted him so!" Again she fell back into the chair, and cried as though her heart would rend itself in twain.

It was the most awkward and painful position in which I had ever found myself, the more so that my name had evidently been employed by the scoundrel who had betrayed the loving trust of this young and beautiful girl. As she was not in a condition to leave the building when it was time for me to go "on," I sent for one of the lady dressers, and she remained with the young woman in my room until my work for the evening was over. Then I learned

the girl's story—the old sad tale of an unscrupulous, lying villain and a too-confiding maid. After making her his plaything for several months he had disappeared, leaving his motherless victim to face the wrath of a stern, unbending father, and the shame of the whole world. That very day she had been expelled for ever from her father's house, and when she came to my dressing-room she had nowhere to lay her head.

I made arrangements with the dresser, a kind-hearted, matronly woman, to give the unfortunate girl lodgings for the night, and next day I made it my business to call upon her father, whom I found to be a respectable foreman tradesman in the city. I explained how I had come to be interested in his daughter's position, and urged him to have pity for his girl, adding that she was more sinned against than sinning, and that, whatever her fate, it was a father's duty to stand by his child in the hour of trial. He listened quietly—too quietly—to all I had to say, then rose and dismissed me with the cold words: "The girl you mention is no longer a daughter of mine. She has brought disgrace upon a Godly house, and I must try to forget that she ever lived!"

"Then may God judge you as you have judged her!" I exclaimed as I made for the door.

A week or two later I was playing in another part of the country, when my eye caught a paragraph in a newspaper which I happened to pick up in a restaurant. It was headed "Suicide in Manchester," and (the cutting lies before me as I write) read as follows:

"Yesterday the body of a young and pretty girl named Edith N—— was found in the canal. She left her father's house some weeks ago, and nothing more was heard of her until yesterday, when a boatman discovered her body floating in the canal as stated. It is reported that the girl had had a quarrel with her lover."

I have often been in Manchester since then, and every time I visit the great Lancashire city my thoughts will persist in wandering back to that scene in the dressing-room. In my mind's eye I see the lovely but agonised features of a young girl, and in my ears there is the ring of her despairing, heart-broken cry: "I trusted him so! I trusted him so!"

## **"BILLY THE BRUSHER"**

**"BILLY THE BRUSHER"** was the hero of Oaktown. He came at an opportune time. The miners all over the Black Country were mourning the loss of pluck, the uprooted stake, the broken rope which had once bounded the arena wherein the fistic champions of Scotland had shown their skill and their stamina. There was not even a prominent football player to whom—metaphorically—they could present the laurel wreath—until "Billy the Brusher" came on the scene. Your miner must have something or someone to admire, to venerate. It's bred in his bone.

Their faith in Billy was touching to witness. He was not much to look at. He was certainly not modelled on the lines of a Greek god, but, if he lacked the beauty of Adonis, he had a big heart—and bigger feet and fists! Opponents contrived to give him a wide berth, and in the early nineties, when football referees were not the power on the field they are to-day, these knights of the whistle



feared the brushing one, whose notions of emphasising an argument were, not to put too fine a point upon it, the reverse of Parliamentary. "If I canna pit a man aff the ba,' I can pit him aff the field onywey," was Billy's little aphorism, the aptness of which was fully realised by his opponents.

Brushing Billy learned the dribbling code in one of the main streets of our dingy but lovable old town. When the pleasures of his fifteenth birthday were still in reserve I made his acquaintance under circumstances like these: About a dozen ragged callants were intent on a game in a back court. A few dirty rags tied tightly together with string did duty for a ball, and the back window of the shop of a stout old pawnbroker served for the goal at one end, while the broken steps of the tenement opposite were requisitioned for the other.

"Goal!" yelled Billy. "Yer a liar!" cried the opposing custodian. "Eh? If I get ye by the lug, I'll——" "Centre the ba'," interjected the frightened goalkeeper, to whom discretion seemed the better part of valour. The match stopped abruptly—all games did in that back court! It happened this way on that occasion. Bill scattered several opponents, and carefully banged the dirty rags through the broker's window. But he did not wait

to claim this goal, and the teams followed his flight when the angry broker rushed into the court, and the neighbours raised their windows to smile at his discomfiture. For ten-per-cent.-Tam was too well known to be loved.

"I'll jile every yin o' thae young scoondrels," he tearfully exclaimed. "They're fair ruinin' me!"

"Wull ye?" rejoined a faded female from the safety of an upper window. "Ye should ken plenty about the jile yersel', ye auld skinflint."

This allur' n to unregenerate days enraged him of the ten-per-cent. Tam had frequently encouraged the same "young scoondrels" to annex trifles from other people, particularly doormats, in which he specialised, reflecting that there was less chance of such petty thefts being detected. But a careless juvenile had been the means of Tam establishing a claim to gratuitous lodgings in a Government establishment, and, stung by a woman's taunt, he hastened after the footballers, vowing vengeance. They, however, had gone in search of fresh fields or, rather, back courts, and, as a witness to the whole scene, I was not sorry to see the boys make good their escape.

Billy's abilities were soon noised abroad, and in

due course a deputation from a Juvenile Club sought his assistance on behalf of their team.

"Whit wull ye gie me?" asked the wary brusher. This rather nonplussed the negotiators, in whose philosophy "professionalism" did not find a place. But their honour was at stake, for were they not going to avenge "that licking frae them west end gentry pups?" A good centre was essential if they were to accomplish their desires. Accordingly there was a hurried consultation, and Billy was offered a "bob" or a knife for his services. He looked contemptuously on the knife, seized the "bob," tested it carefully between his teeth, and condescended to say, "Richt, I'll play."

He did, and the "gentry pups" were humbled. Billy's promotion was rapid. From juvenile to junior ranks was but a step. He was not an immediate success as a junior. Unaccustomed as he was to luxuries, he did not take kindly to carrying the smart leather Gladstone bag with which the new organisation presented him, and I grieve to say that the jeers of his old associates was one element in a little transaction which subsequently took place at an establishment whose symbol is three gilded balls.

Billy had to travel with the team to Glasgow the

following Saturday, and great was the consternation of the officials when he failed to put in an appearance as arranged five minutes before the train time. Hope gave way to despair, but just as the train was about to leave Billy dashed up, greatly to the relief of the worried Secretary. It was noticed that his "togs" were done up in an old newspaper, and Billy explained casually that he "couldnna thole them bags—that jist looked as if a chap wantit to pit on 'side.'"

Billy soon conquered his shyness, and became the success and the pet of the team. Professionalism may not be legal in junior football circles, but it is, and has been, common nevertheless. One morning Billy received a rather vague letter from a flourishing Glasgow club, telling him they'd get him a job if he played for them. Billy's written reply was characteristic and laconic: "Am no gaun to play for naething." He played, and the natural inference was that he got something.

Grave charges of professionalism soon became the theme in junior circles, and an investigation was ordered. Now it happened that the old-time Secretary of Billy's new club had resigned in a rage, carefully carrying with him the letter with the significant intimation. Bill was summoned to

appear, and in a gorgeous new muffler (badge of prosperity in Oaktown), hooker-doon cap, and greasy "bell-moothed troosers" he entered the "Association" meeting and answered the questions of the Chairman of the Committee, who had his own idea as to how to conduct a cross-examination.

"Here, Billy, ye may as well tell us the truth—hoo much dae the Rovers gie ye i' the week?"

"As much as ye could see wi' yer een shut," answered Billy. "Whit di ye mean? Don't trifle wi' the Committee!" thundered the pompous Chairman with great assumption of self-righteousness.

"Naething!" was the calm response.

"Ay thocht so!" cried the exultant Chairman, flourishing his trump card in the shape of the incriminating letter. "What dae ye mean by writing to the Rovers' Secretary and saying ye wadna play fur naething, eh? Whit is naething?"

"A bung withoot a barrel," was the smiling answer. Many of the members of the Committee could scarce forbear to smile at the clever rejoinder, and Billy was allowed to "stand down."

At this juncture the Oaktown Athletic, the favourite senior team of Billy's native place, was in a rather lowly position, and the Scottish ties were at hand. "Get Billy the Brusher," was the advice

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of the patrons. "He's yin o' oorsel's, an' he'll be a credit to us a'." Billy was accordingly "approached," and offered a job and a "quid" a week.

"Whit wey should a fella wi' a quid a week work?" asked a great centre in astonishment.

"'Cos it's a fine wey o' keepin' ye in form an' oot o' the pubs. The wey Scotch players are often failures in England is 'cos they dinna work," was the reply.

Billy would very gladly have accepted the twenty shillings a week without the job, and thus lived in idle affluence, but the Committee were firm, and insisted on him taking the job as well. Being assured that it was "a saft crib," under a gaffer who was an enthusiastic member of the club he latterly agreed, and duly "signed on" for the "Oaktown Athletic."

The draw for the first round for the Scottish Cup was waited with bated breath in Oaktown, and when the news came that the Athletic were to meet the Port-Garvel Rovers, their near neighbours and avowed enemies, the Oaktown folk pulled rather long faces, for the match had to be played at Port-Garvel, and the Rovers were going strong! Local rivalry is keen everywhere, but in no place is it

keener than in the localities in which these teams play, and it is not half so bitter anywhere.

"We're in for it," sighed the disconsolate Chairman of the Athletic. "It's 5 to 1 we'll get knocked out o' the ties. That means nae mair guid 'gates,' and there's that whusky bill fur the last twa seasons no' pey'd yet!"

"But the team's stronger, noo that we've got Brushin' Billy," interposed the Secretary.

"Oh, ay, but he canna play eleven men," was the doleful answer.

"Leave that to me," was the Secretary's ambiguous retort.

The Secretary's plan was revealed in the Steel Works next day, and anyone who had happened to be present might have overheard this frank conversation:

"What dae you think o' the draw, Billy?"

"Ach! we'll gie them something tae think about if we dinna bate them," coolly said the centre.

"Did ye hear that Rafferty, yon big centre-haaf o' theirs, says he'll make ye look a bigger fule than ye are?"

"Whit?" cried the astonished and very irate Billy, swiftly removing his old clay pipe from his firm jaw.

"Says he'll make a fitba' o' you!" was the explanation, given with emphasis.

Bill advanced towards the Secretary with clenched fists and flashing eyes. "He said that, did he? I'm b——" He did not finish his threat, but the curl of his upper lip and the rapid jerking of his head boded no good for the unsuspecting Rafferty.

"Ay, an' Tammy M'Phee, the richt back o' the Rovers—he swears that he'll lay ye oot for deid five meenits efter the gemme starts."

Billy's rage knew no bounds. He didn't stamp around and vow vengeance there and then, but the astute Secretary saw that the poison was doing its work. Well he knew that Billy the Brusher would go on the field with one fell design, and one only—to deal havoc to the bodies and limbs of Rafferty and M'Phee, the stalwarts, and the best players of the Rovers' eleven. There was an uncanny glitter in the Brusher's eyes as the Secretary nodded good-bye and strolled off.

It was certainly a dainty bit plan, and it was arranged and carried out with consummate skill. During the next few days the Oaktown men "in the know" rubbed it into Billy. It may have been a pure coincidence, of course, that when the Brusher



happened to be passing along the street he'd be sure to overhear something like this:

"Ay, an' Rafferty's jist the man to dae it! Puir Billy! I'm thinkin' he'll be cairted aff in the first five meenits"; or "Tammy M'Phee'll settle Billy afore hauf-time!"

Billy's silence was ominous. The only sign he gave was a little tightening of the lips, but that was enough for the astute Secretary and his confederates, who knew a little of Billy's character.

On the eve of the match the Oaktown paper fanned the excitement by declaring that "bar accidents the Port-Garvel Rovers should win." The Port-Garvel paper went one better: "It's all over but the shouting," was its unsportsmanlike comment.

Saturday came at last. Port-Garvel is six miles distant from Oaktown, and trains, brakes, 'buses, and roadside were filled to overflowing by excited supporters with caps decorated with little cards on which were the legends: "Play up, Oaktown!" and "Rovers for ever!"

The Athletic drove over in a four-in-hand. Billy seated near the driver seemed steeped in contemplation, and there was an anticipatory smile on the Secretary's countenance, which only served to

heighten the gloom of the harassed Chairman, whose thoughts were apparently centred on that heavy unpaid whisky bill. What a crowd there was on the ground of the Port-Garvel Rovers—a surging crowd, seething with excitement! Football crowds are pretty much alike all over the country, but for individuality, red-hot partisanship, and readiness to quarrel and fight, give me a Port-Garvel crowd on a “pey Setterday.”

The proverbial Irishman at the fair, asking for someone to tread on the tail of his coat is an inoffensive individual compared with a tipsy miner, shouting defiance and breathing stale whisky all round. When the Oaktown supporters rushed into the ground the usual compliments were exchanged in the usual way, and free fights were common all round the enclosure. The place was literally palpitating with excitement. When it leaked out that “Billy meant business,” Oaktown shouted gladly, and Port-Garvel groaned sadly.

An exultant yell greeted the appearance of the Port-Garvel Rovers, who seemed to be in the pink of condition. The Oaktown Athletic followed at their heels, and were welcomed in true Oaktown style. A hush fell on the crowd when the teams lined up. The “Port” right wing quickly got the

ball and rushed up the field, and the local enthusiasts got their fill of yelling what time the Oaktown men held their breath.

"Pass to Wulson, can't ye, ye fule! Good! Heavens, he's missed it!" A groan and a curse.

"Wha's shovin'? Awa', or I'll shift yer nose!" "Am no bletheron! I've paid ma tanner as well as you!"—thus the people around the ropes.

"Good old Oaktown. Come on, boys!" The boys "came on," bravely led by Brushing Billy. Rafferty approached to stop him, and a thousand eyes were on them as they raced towards each other. Rafferty finessed a little; Billy did not. He leapt fiercely on his opponent, who bit the dust and rolled over in agony.

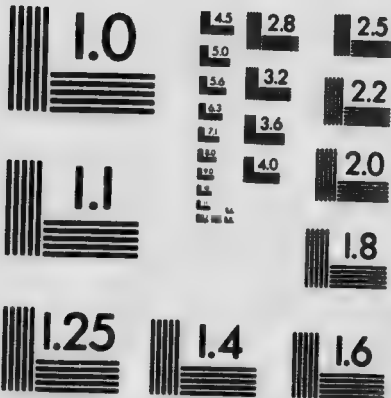
"Great heavens!" "Did ye see that, referee?" "Pit him aff. It's a ——— shame." "Ca' that fit-ba'?" "The coward; kick in his timbers!" (Port-Garvel for ribs!)

The Oaktown people chortled with joy, and applauded vigorously as Billy, steering past his wounded foe, crushed his way out of a crowd of players, and with the speed of a deer raced past the Port backs and baffled the goalkeeper with a shot he hardly saw. Cheers and yells, loud and prolonged, greeted the achievement.



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"My bonny lad, Billy," roared a delighted Oak-town publican, but he had reason to be sorry for his paternal claim.

"Your lad!" sneered a grimy-faced "Port" man as he butted the Boniface in the pit of the stomach with his head, and sent him head over heels in the mud. "Awa' hame and pit him on yer sideboard—he's only a —— ornament!"

Rafferty was carried to the pavilion, and, judging from the set faces of his comrades, the real struggle was about to begin. The game went on. "Go fur the 'Brusher!'" urged the Portonians. "Ay, knock him oot!" But the advisers were all safe outside the ropes, and those of the players whom they desired to avenge poor Rafferty soon felt the field a trifle too small. Billy was here, there, and everywhere. The referee warned him, but it was no good. Billy kept on in his own sweet way, and half-time came as a decided relief to the Rovers.

The spectators whiled away the ten minutes' interval in the customary fashion. Fights were renewed with added zest, bottles were uncorked, and threats loud and sanguinary filled the air.

The second half began in stirring style. When an Oaktown player did a smart thing his townsmen cheered to the echo; when he did a dirty thing

it was quietly passed over. And the Port-Garvel spectators behaved likewise. The "Port" team played with the desperation of despair, and although they had only ten men they made things lively for their opponents.

"Penalty kick!" was the unanimous yell of the Port people as Billy, lying far back during an anxious time of defence, was seen to make one of the Rovers' forwards perform a cruel somersault within the dreaded line. "Ay, it's a penalty!" was the glad comment of the home supporters as the referee pointed to the line. A pause, a kick, cheers which might have been heard at Glasgow, and the scores were level!

Billy pulled in his belt, and again the game went on. "Oaktown for ever!" was the wild shriek from five hundred throats as the Brusher ploughed through the ranks of his opponents and, shaking off all comers, kicked a second goal amid tumultuous cheers.

"Watch him, Tammy!" "Look out for the Brush-er!" cried the crestfallen "Port" folk a few minutes later, but their advice fell on unconscious ears, for before it was wafted to M'Phee, the right back, he was lying limp beside the goal. Billy was avenged! There was a tremendous flare up. Billy

was ordered off, but he did not go straight to the pavilion. From the midst of a knot of admirers he eagerly watched the closing scenes of the match. The Port made heroic efforts to get level again. Billy craned his neck as they rushed in on the Oaktown goal, and just when it seemed all over with the defence the whistle blew! Oaktown had won—won by Billy's second goal!

Billy was duly suspended, but if he is a poor soldier who cannot show scars, he is a weak footballer whose record does not include one or two such marks of attention as awarded Billy's work that winter's afternoon. All players have their day, and Billy had his. He now keeps a snug little pub.—the last reward of the professional football player.



## THE ROLLING STONE

WULL M'TEAR was one of those chaps that are never content. There are lots of them in the world. If he had thirty shillings to draw at the pithead on Saturday he thought he had worked hard enough for thirty-five. If the coal seam at which he was employed was wet and disagreeable he cursed the gaffer for sending him there, forgetting that there were other seams equally damp and equally uncomfortable. If he was out of a job he was ill at ease, but scarcely more so than when he had work to go to. In fact, if Wull had ever found a sovereign on the roadside he would have complained that it was not a five-pound note!

Yet, in spite of this not uncommon warp in his nature, he was one of the most amusing fellows in Lanarkshire. Nobody could lay off a yarn half so well as he; few could give him a start at any game or sport, and certainly not one of his mining compatriots would ever have dared to pit himself against Wull M'Tear in wordy warfare or a battle

of wits. He had a brain as keen as a needle, and had he had the advantage of education he would probably have made a name for himself. As it was, he was not even a good miner. His heart was always longing for other scenes than the grim, cold, dripping walls of the mine, and other and more pleasant duties than the constant hewing of black diamonds.

Wull's peculiarities of disposition asserted themselves in many unique ways. For the amusements of the ordinary miner, such as strolling out the quarry road of an evening, attending the dancing classes—the "jiggins"—or lining the ropes at the local football matches on Saturday afternoon—for these he had the most utter contempt.

Get up a cycle race, and he was the first to enter. Arrange a little prize-fight between two district champions, and he was one of the leading spirits in the "mill." Ask him to play football, and he agreed at once; to watch other fellows doing it, was, in his eyes, too ridiculous for words.

Wull kept a lurcher—a breed between a collie and a greyhound—and a bantam cock; the former for a bit of quiet poaching, when opportunity offered, and the latter for matching against any other bantam the district or county might possess. Both

dog and bird Wull loved with the full power of his being, and had it been necessary he would have starved himself in order that they might be properly fed and treated.

He lost the dog first—a great blow to poor Wull! It was this way: Out one morning on the lands of a farmer in the Blantyre district Wull and his trusty canine ran full tilt into the farmer while skirting a little plantation near the roadside. The farmer had his bull terrier with him, and the latter, at a word from his master, made short work of “Dick,” fastening on to the lurcher’s throat, and practically killing it on the spot. Wull refused to take to his heels and leave his dog, and the farmer was so struck with his devotion, and so melted by Wull’s distress at the animal’s sudden fate, that he not only did his best to save “Dick” from the iron jaws of the terrier, but told Wull that he “wouldna say a word about it to the sergeant.” Wull thanked him with tears in his eyes, and latterly carried home in his arms the dead body of his well-beloved dog. He buried it in the dusk of next evening with every manifestation of love and grief.

After “Dick’s” untimely demise, Wull lavished all his affection on the bantam cock, but when it was killed in a fight for two pounds ten shillings

a side with a famous bird from "The Shotts," he had nothing more to live for. A day or two later he disappeared from Hamilton. He had neither father nor mother to mourn his departure, and in a few days his name was forgotten. But I had always a sneaking fancy for Wull, and when I came to go out into the world I often found myself wondering whether I should ever meet him or hear of him.

I did both, and the incidents I will now relate are partly from Wull's own lips, and partly from the reports of other west country people who had happened to drop across him in the course of his wanderings.

On leaving Hamilton he went up to Glasgow and joined the Cameron Highlanders. Soon the regiment was transferred to India, whither Wull, of course, went with it, and he was not long there ere he became Captain's body-servant and valet. He got this job in rather an extraordinary fashion. Outside the barracks gate one night the Captain had taken by surprise a goodly number of the regiment enthusiastically looking on at what was evidently a stand-up prize fight between two brawny Tommies—an Englishman and a Scotsman. The

officer promptly put a stop to the proceedings, and reported them to the Colonel.

At the enquiry which ensued, it transpired that Private M'Tear and Corporal Robinson had had some words in the canteen concerning the soldierly qualities of their respective Captains. Corporal Robinson had characterised M'Tear's Captain as a "stuck-up prig, and no soldier," and Wull had replied to that aspersion on his officer by promptly displacing two of Robinson's front teeth. The subsequent fight had been duly arranged, and, when interrupted, looked like ending in an easy win for the fiery Scot.

The Captain of Wull's Company heard the whole story, and was so impressed with the youth's zeal on behalf of his honour that he made him his valet and personal retainer. A more faithful servant no one could have wished for. Two years later the "scots" were transferred from India to South Africa, and Captain D—— fell at the head of his regiment in one of the Modder River engagements. In the same fight Private M'Tear was wounded, and on leaving hospital was sent home to England to recuperate. Captain D—— had left him by his will a sum of £200, and with part of this money Wull bought his discharge from the army, assert-

ing to a friend that he would rather "fecht wi' his fists than wi' a gun ony day in the week."

The next time I heard of Wull he was doing splendidly in a small contractor's business down Portsmouth way, but a year later I learned that the charms of a touring pantomime fairy had proved too much for him. Together they made short work of all his available funds, and the business collapsed like a pack of cards. When Wull's money was finished, the fairy went off with some other man; "fairies" of this description always do so!

Two years elapsed, and Wull M'Tear was the last man in the world I was thinking of as I strolled down Lime Street, Liverpool. Up he popped, however, and extended his hand. We shook and adjourned to the Victoria Hotel, where for fully three hours Wull kept me in fits of laughter, relating the experiences of a life which was as chokeful of incidents as an egg—a good one—is full of—well, fulness.

Since the Portsmouth contracting business was sacrificed for "love," Wull had had a most varied and adventurous career. He had wandered the streets of London without a copper in his pocket. He had "borrowed" ten shillings from an old com-

panion that he met one night at a music-hall door, and ran it into £40 by the aid of a "dollar double event" and subsequent lucky bets. With this money he went to New York, only to get robbed of his last cent, laid out, and left for dead in a Bowery gambling den. Then somehow he gravitated to Chicago, and got work in one of the huge canning factories. But the "dead dog line of business," as he remarked, had no fancy for him, and latterly he shipped as a cook's mate on a tramp steamer from San Francisco to Australia. The Island Continent held out no attractions for him, and another long voyage—this time on a sailing ship—saw him land once more in New York. From there he signed on as an attendant on a Liverpool-bound cattle ship.

"And there's no more sailing for me, Harry, ma lad," he went on. "Anybody that fancies the sea should just make one trip on a cattle boat, and he'll never ask to see salt water again! Talk about hell upon earth!—a cattle boat's hell on the ocean! However, the trip sort o' set me on ma feet again, for I won £12 10s. at faro on the voyage—cleaned out all the cattlemen on board, gaffer included!"

Wull next settled down as a hairdresser in a village near Fleetwood, buying for £5 a business in

this line which he saw advertised. I will now let him tell the rest of his story in his own words, although I cannot hope to convey any idea of the side-splitting manner in which he related the very latest adventure of a human rolling-stone.

"The barber's business," he went on, "was well worth the fiver I paid for it, and I could quite easily see a livin' in it—until I got tired o' scissor-clickin' and razordiddlin'!" (I didn't ask him where he had acquired these handy accomplishments, but I knew that Wull was a man of many trades.) "It was all right in the daytime, with 'shaves' and 'hair cuts' droppin' in at intervals, but the village was deadly dull at night, with only two pubs and no theatre and music hall. So a lively idea struck me. Among my customers were a number o' village young fellows and farm servants from the surrounding district, and it occurred to me that it wouldn't be a bad idea to start a sort of athletic class in my back shop after business hours.

"The back shop was a large, roomy place, an' it cost very little to fit it up with a few chairs, a punch ball, two sets of Indian clubs, a pair of dumb-bells, a 56-pound weight, a pair o' boxin' gloves, an' half a dozen spittoons. I told a few o' the boys what I was doing, an' they weighed in with



their half-crown entry money like real toffs. I got a board painted with the words, 'William M'Tear, hairdresser and athletic tutor,' and hung it above the shop door. In less than a fortnight I had fully a dozen 'pupils,' but the athletic training I gave them consisted chiefly of playing dominoes with them for a penny a 'chalk.'

"However, I occasionally put on the gloves an' had a round or two with the bigger and stronger fellows. I was always pretty good at 'jukes up,' as you may remember, Harry, an' I had no trouble in more than holding my own with all-comers. But one night a big country chap with whom I was sparring gave me a nasty jab on the eye. He didn't mean it, bless you! but I lost ma dander and let him have a square one on the jaw. He went down and out like a wax vesta. He came round in a few minutes, an', of course, I told him that I didn't mean to hurt him, that I was very sorry, an' all the usual rot. There was a queer look in the fellow's eye as he said good-night. But I paid no notice, and only remembered it when it was too late.

"He came back quite regularly, but never put on the gloves again. One night about ten days after the knock-out incident he introduced a new 'pupil' to me—a friend of his from a neighbouring farm,

he said. The newcomer was a thick-set, stupid-lookin' chap of about twenty-four, who kidded as neat as ninepence that he had never seen an Indian club, a dumb-bell, or a boxing glove in all his life. I was very nice to him, bein' a new pupil, you know, and explained all about my system of physical culture between the 'hands' in a game of penny nap. Latterly one of the boys, a pal of the chap I had knocked out, innocently suggested that I should give the newcomer 'a lesson with the gloves.'

"I suspected nothing even then, an' cheerfully pulled on the mitts. The stranger did the same, an' we set-to. In less than five seconds he had fetched me a 'hook' on the ear that sent me staggering to the ropes—into the fireplace as a matter-of-fact! The whole plot dawned on me there and then; big Dan 'had it in for me,' and had brought over some professor at the game to lay me out. But I made up my mind to die game! I rushed in an' tried to plant a 'wind-jammer,' but my man was too quick for me, an' landed a square punch on the jaw that made every tooth in my head rattle. There was no question of rounds in that fight, Harry; less than one settled me. When I came to my senses all my friends and pupils had cleared out save one, an'

he was my Saturday night 'scraper'! What a picture I was! My own mother wouldn't have known me! Both my eyes were plugged, my nose was spread over my face, my left ear was split in halves, an' two o' my front teeth were missin'.

"I was in bed for a week. When I came down to open the shop, I found that another fellow had started as a barber six doors up the street, and a look at his place soon showed me that my shanty was an 'also ran' to his 'winner.' Even my Saturday night 'scraper' had deserted me and gone over to the opposition. I left the village for good with the evening train that night. The porter at the station was a pal of mine—many a 'hauf' I had stood him—an' he told me that the bloke who knocked me out was none other than 'Welting William, of Wallsend.' Big Dan had seen him perform in a booth at a neighbouring village, and had prevailed on him—for a consideration—to come over to my place and give me a 'doing' in return for my too strenuous attentions to himself. I've chucked the athletic-tutor business for good, Harry—too dangerous!"

## THE HEATIN' O' THE HOOSE

"GAUN up to Jamie Morrison's the nicht, Harry?" asked a miner chum of me one evening some twenty years ago as he and I stepped off the "cage" at Eddlewood Colliery after a hard, wet "shift."

"I wasna thinkin' about it, Watty," was my reply. "What's on?"

"Oh! have ye no' heard? Jamie's gettin' mair-ried on Friday, and there's a bunch o' us chaps gaun up the nicht to heat the hoose for them. You should come."

"Will there be ony fun?" was my next query.

"Sure to be!" was Watty Anderson's emphatic reply. "Baith the guid-faithers will be there, an' I'm telt they havena much love for each ither. You should slip up for an 'oor or twa."

I thereupon agreed to be one of the party. Jamie Morrison I only knew slightly, but his sweetheart was one of the prettiest girls in Hamilton, and—until she finally "took up" with Jamie—was much

courted by the young miners of the town. As a matter of fact, I had had a bold bid myself for the affections of the young lady, but, meeting with little success, had transferred my heart to another, and—need I say it?—an even better quarter. To this extent, therefore, I could claim to have a slight interest in Jamie Morrison's approaching wedding, so that there was nothing out of place in my resolving to form one of the "house-warming" party. I hurried home, washed the coal dust from my hands and face, polished off a gigantic plateful of ham and eggs—the young miner's favourite supper—and set out downtown to find in some of the Hamilton shops a suitable present for Jamie and his future wife.

Nobody in Lanarkshire takes part in the interesting ceremony I have referred to without carrying with him a gift of some kind or another. It is the equivalent in higher walks of life of sending your marriage present to the house of the bride, and it has this advantage: that you can offer in person, along with the handing over of the gift, your felicitations and your good wishes for a "happy wedded life and a large family."

At eight o'clock some half-dozen of us all met by appointment and sauntered up to the house, where,

a day or two later, Jamie Morrison was to bring bonny Katie Lee as his partner for weal or woe. Jamie himself came to the door, and gleefully ushered us into the kitchen—as cosy and tidy a wee nook as ever you saw. The walls had been freshly papered; the fireplace was shining; the yellow wax-cloth was spotless; and the bed—well, a Princess might have had a costlier resting-place prepared for her, but certainly not a cleaner or more inviting. Everything was “split-new,” and in apple-pie order, and Jamie proudly stood aside while the “boys” looked round in admiration.

“But whaur’s Kate?” latterly asked big Sandy Vallance, nudging Jamie in the ribs and winking slyly. “The place is r / complete without a mistress, ye ken.”

“That’s richt enough, Sandy,” replied Jamie, laughing, “but she doesna get the job afore Friday nicht. Besides, she bade me tell ye that she was ower bashfu’ to wait for ye, but she hopes ye’ll a’ hae a good time. I wantit her to wait, but lassies are awfu’ queer craiturs, especially jist afore they’re mairried.”

“Well, Jamie,” remarked Tam Smith, the ostler at the pit where we were all employed, “you’ve done

her a treat, mind I'm tellin' ye! It's no every lass that gets such a dandy doon-sittin'!"

Then we began to produce our respective presents. Watty Anderson had brought a canary in a cage.

"Here, Jamie," was all Watty said by way of a "presentation" speech as he set the cage down on the table and stripped off the brown paper encircling the bars; "it's a rare whistler! I bred it masel', an' I widna tak' a pound-note for the cock it cam' aff! When you an' the wife hae a row it'll sing like the deevil an' keep the neebours frae hearin'."

Another of the company coolly walked over to the fireplace, noted with great satisfaction that while there was a fender with "Home, Sweet Home" engraved upon it, there were no fire-irons, and promptly opened up a parcel containing a full set of these homely but necessary implements. The tongs, poker, and shovel he arranged as artistically as he could, and, the task completed, he expressed the cheerful hope that Jamie would never have cause to use the poker on "the wife's heid."

"A body never kens," jocularly responded Jamie, "but I dinna think I'll ever sae far forget masel'—that is, if she does what she's teit."

"Hear, hear!" was the approving chorus from the crowd.

A red cotton tablecover was produced by another, a set of forks and knives by a fourth, and every one of the visitors followed with some handy and useful household articles. My gifts, if I remember correctly, were a paraffin lamp, a tin pail, and a blacklead brush! Jamie was kept busy returning his thanks, and if these were expressed in quiet, homely language, they were none the less sincere and heartfelt.

"Man, lads, Kate'll be as prood as a Queen when she comes ower the morn's mornin' an' sees a' thae fine things. It's a rare help to a fellow," he added, "for there's a heap o' expense when ye get mairied."

"Yer richt there, Jamie!" exclaimed Sandy Valance. "I'll wager ye've broken the back o' a ten-pound note already?"

"Ay, easy, Sandy," responded the prospective bridegroom with a solemn shake of his head. But then, brightening instantly, he added: "She's worth it a', tho'!"

"I'm awfu' dry!" here interjected one of the younger men, casting his eyes in the direction of a basket beneath the table. The observation at once



brought Jamie back to a sense of his duties, and he apologised profusely for his apparent neglect as he pulled the basket from its resting-place.

"I'm that excitit I clean forgot about the booze!" he went on. "There's beer, porter, and whisky here—plenty o' them a'! Jist sing oot what ye'll hae! Peter Purdie! ye'll get some tumblers in that press there! Mind ye dinna break them—they're a present frae the wife's mither."

Peter Purdie was by no means unwilling to lend assistance, and soon we were a jovial company. Of course the first toast was "Long life and happiness," etc., and it was pledged with the utmost enthusiasm. Old Jamie Morrison, young Jamie's father, dropped in just in time to honour the toast, and a few minutes later Davit Lee, Kate's father, also put in an appearance. Both worthies were cordially welcomed and provided with seats, one on each side of a roaring fire.

"Will ye hae some water in yer whusky, Davit?" asked young Jamie, solicitously attending to the comforts of the latest arrival.

"Deed, no," growled Davit, "the Hamilton whusky's well enough watter't afore it leaves the pubs."

This humorous observation from the old man put

everybody in the best of glee, and a long "toast-list" was proceeded with. A bumper was quaffed to "the bridegroom," another to "the bride," and a third to "the best man," and a fourth—I really forget what the fourth, fifth, sixth, and succeeding toasts were, but you can take it from me that they were done thorough justice to.

By this time several of the company were in a particularly happy, not to say garrulous, frame of mind, and the fun and banter waxed fast and furious as one cork plunked after another.

"Well, Jamie," broke out Sandy Vallance, during a temporary lull in the proceedings, "I've only ane bit o' advice to gie ye, an' if ye tak' it it'll save ye a heap o' trouble."

"What's that, Sandy?" asked the prospective bridegroom laughingly.

"The mornin' efter ye're mairried," continued Sandy, "jist lift up yer troosers afore ye pit them on, an' says you: 'Look here, Kate; there they are; wha's gaun to wear them—you or me?' Of course she'll blush, an' she'll say, 'Oh, you, Jamie; I wouldna hae onything to dae wi' them.' Well, keep her to the bargain. That's a' I've got to say. Here's to ye baith!" And Vallance emptied his glass amidst laughter and applause.

Jamie's intended father-in-law thoroughly enjoyed Sandy's advice, but added, with a shrewd shake of his head: "By gor', Jimmock, that's a very we'll in its wey, but if Kate's like her mither ye'll no wear the troosers lang."

"Dae ye think so, Davit?" tartly interjected Jamie's father, leaning forward and peering into the former's face. "Let me tell ye this, auld man, that if Jamie's like his faither he'll lat nae woman wear his troosers. Only a muckle saftie wad aloo his wife to wear the troosers—an' that's up against ye, auld man!"

Davit Lee rose from his seat and made one slow, calculating step in the direction of old Jamie.

"I hope, Jamie Morrison, that ye dinna mean to say I'm a muckle saftie. Because if ye div, I can jist prove to ye in twa meenits that I'm as guid a man as you. See?" And Davit snapped his fingers in the other's face.

"Prove it, then!" roared Jamie, senior, making an effort to struggle to his feet, while his eyes began to dance angrily as he glared at his challenger.

But we saw that there was going to be trouble if we did not interfere at this stage, so two or three of us set about appeasing the wrath of old Davit, while young Jamie and Watty Anderson did their

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best to mollify "Jimmock's" father, the son sternly ordering him to "sit down, ye auld fule, we're to hae nae fechtin' here; if ye maun fecht, gang outside an' dae't, an' no start barkin' in my hoose like a couple o' terrier dogs."

Peace was soon restored, and over another glass the old fellows shook hands and resumed their seats as if nothing had happened.

Then young Jamie made a speech. He was by no means dead sober, and I am afraid he enlarged upon certain aspects of his married life which he would have been wise to keep to himself. For instance, he went on, after enumerating all the good points of his future spouse, to remark that he would like it to be plainly understood that he was marrying her only, "an' no the hail Lee faimly." To this observation old Davit gave a half-hearted "hear, hear, Jamie!" but he rose once more to his feet when he heard his son-in-law to-be asserting that if any of that family interfered with him he would take prompt and decided measures of dealing with them—or words to that effect.

"Look here, Jimmock, ma lad!" broke in Davit, now speaking somewhat thickly and holding on to the armchair in which he had been sitting, "I wad like to ken exactly what ye mean! Neither the wife

nor me'll ever need onything aff ye, I hope, an' I must say that I dinna much care for the tone o' yer observations, young fella!"

"Nae her. n meant, Davit!" hurriedly explained Jamie, "nae herm at a'! I only mean—well, I hope—at least, I don't think—Ach! ye a' ken fine what I mean! Sit doon on yer seat! Peter Purdie, gie the auld chap a dram!"

The dram served its purpose, and Jamie was allowed to continue. But the interruption had evidently unsettled him, for he went on in very rambling fashion to refer to future events and possibilities in his career as a family man which might have been very well left unhinted at.

"I hope the first yin's a lauddie, chaps, an' if it is I'll ca' him efter ma faither, there."

"Richt! Jamie," exclaimed old Morrison, joyfully flourishing a half-filled tumbler of beer. "Ye couldna ca' the wean efter a better man, tho' it's mase' that says it."

"And if the second yin's a lassie," went on young Jamie, "I'll ca' her efter ma mither, for she's——"

"Ye'll what?" roared Davit, springing to his feet. "Ye can ca' the first yin what ye like, Jimmock, but if the second yin's a lassie, I insist on the nam-in' o't being left to the wife's side o' the hoose. It's only fair, I tell ye, an' it'll be a scandal if ye dae

ony ither thing! I'm gaun hame, lada," he concluded. "I've had quite plenty o' this!"

"Ye're awfu' huffy, guid-faither," retorted Jimmie. "Ye wad think the bairns were yours. They're mine, an' I'll ca' them what I like that! an' that's to yer face!"

Gradually it began to dawn on some of us—especially those who had been confining their bibulations to lemonade and brown robin—that a quarrel on such a ludicrous subject was the height of stupidity, and Peter Purdie restored something like good humour to the situation by asking Jamie what he would "kirsten his bairns if he didna hae ony at a'."

"By gor'! Jimmock," laughed old Davit, once more subsiding into the armcha'r, "I never thoct o' that! We're a' countin' yer chickens afore they're hatched! But mind ye, when the second yin arrives—if ever it comes—I'll still hand to my opinion that the wife's side should hae the say in the namin' o't."

Big Sandy Vallance then made the harmony complete by expressing the hope that Jamie would soon be father of two fine boys. "In that case, Jamie," he went on, "ye should ca' them Rab Roy and Macbeth, an' that wad save a' trouble. Scotland for ever!"

## "DOON THE WATER"

It was approaching "Glasgow Fair," the great holiday time of the year, when the men folks would treat their wives and bairns to a trip to the coast, to the watering-places, doon the water, and the whole topic of conversation was "Where are ye gan at the Fair?"

Collins' big printing work was "scalin'" the crowd o' lassies were wending their several ways up the High Street, along the gallow-gate and doon the salt market, crossing the Albert Brig to the south side. Wee Jean McColl was sliding along arm in arm with another two, when the conversation turned on to the Fair, Holidays. Wee Jean McColl said to Bell Broon, "Where's Tam and you gan' this year?" "Oh," said Bell Broon, "we're gan' tae Rothesay—the first day, anyway." Wee Jean said, "Rothesay? I widn't go tae yon Hungry Hole. Hughie and I went there last year, and wait till I tell you a' about it. We started frae the Bromilaw at six in the mornin', and by the time we

got doon the length o' deed slow, I was as sick as a hauf-deed dug. It was awfu'. I was stuck at the sharp end o' the boat a' the road, as Hughie said, 'Let's get a' the fresh air we can,' and just as we were passing Bowling I had tae let go; I couldna' staun' it any langer. O, I wis sick. Hughie said, 'Jean, will I fetch ye something up frae the bar?' I said, 'A drink o' soda,' but it wisna' doon twa ticks till up it came. O, I wis sick. However, I got a wee better, and Hughie said, 'Let's daunner back to the back end o' the boat; there's some fun gan' an there.' So I staggered along, haudin' on tae Hughie like grim death. O, I wis sick; but the change to the blunt end o' the boat done me a lot o' guid. Hughie's chum, Wee Bowlie Smith, had a melodian, so the dancing was began, and after a wee drink o' caul' water I cam tae, and started in wan o' the bunches o' the quadrilles, and I can tell ye by the time we got tae Gourrock, I was wringing through wae sweat, and Hughie's collar was as saft as butter. Then the rain cam' on, and we had tae go doon below. Well, I was sick before, but the second time was awfu'. Ye see, I had naething on my storach, and I can tell ye, I gie near kicked oot a'-the-gither; I was worse than sick; I was half deed. Hooever, by the time we got tae



Rothsay it was fair, and the sun cam' oot as we strolled along the front. Hughie says tae me, 'Dae ye think ye could eat something noo?' I said, 'Whatever ye think yersel', Hughie.' So in we went tae wan of yon wee eatin' hooses, and ordered ham and eggs, and twa slices o' bread each. O, I was hungry by this time; I could have eaten a cuddy; but, however, as I was telling ye, in cam' the ham and eggs and the buttered bread. Well, I'm no tellin' ye a lee, but as sure as death they spread the butter on and then scraped it off, and the size of the eggs! ye never saw the like—I swore they were doo's eggs; and a wee crunch o' ham the size o' my pinkie. What dae ye think they charged Hughie? One an' a tanner a heed; it was awfu'; really am no jokin' but ye can get a pun o' ham in Glesca' for fourpence, and a dizzen o' eggs for sevenpence. So ye see the profit they make; it's doon-right swindlin' at the fair. Hooever, we had tae pit up wae it, and after we cam' oot we went intae a ice-cream shop, and had twa MacCullums and a slider each, and then we went tae the aquarium. But I got sick again lookin' at the monkeys, and I lost my ham and eggs. It was chawin' after payin' wan and six for them. So I said, 'Nae mair indoor for us the day, Hughie.' So we went along the beach and

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I took off my boots. Well, they werena' boots, they were nice gutty shoes Hughie bocht for me on the Friday night afore we went awa' on the Saturday. Hooever, as I was sayin', there was I in paddlin' and Hughie sittin' on the beach chuckin' in chuckie stanes and splashin' me. It was awfu' caul', although the sun was burnin' hot. So I coaxed Hughie tae tak' off his boots and come in and paddle; so there was him and I padd'in' and paddlin' and the sun shinin'. O, it was great, but what dae ye think? When we cam' oot o' the water, the sun had melted my gutty shune, and I had tae sit on the beach tae Hughie ran intae the toon tae buy me a pair o' cheap rubbers till we got hame. I'm telling ye it was a day o' trouble, wan thing efter anither. But that's no' the worst. Hughie wid hae me tae go oot and hae a row in a sma' boat. I didna' want tae go, but, hooever, him bein' my lad and sae kind, I didna' want tae anger him, so I just did as he wished, but never again. We had just got oot aboot twa boat lengths when alang cam past a steamer and upset Hughie and me. Well, I just closed my ee'n, and doon I went. I remember nae mair till I cam' tae my senses in a wee hoose up a back street aboot ten o'clock at nicht, and there was Hughie standin' lookin' in my face. So I just burst oot greetin', but

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he put his arms roon' my neck, and kissed me twice, and said, 'Ye're a' richt noo, Bell. We'll tak' the first boat hame the morn'; and it'll be twa wat days and a dry yin before I gang doon the water again."

**THE END**

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